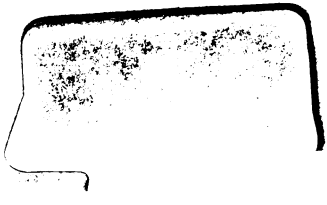

William Woolsey
Leicester, 1845.

W. H. Hnutt
Oxford, 1883.

THE RETURNS OF SPIRITUAL Comfort *and* Grief, IN A DEVOUT SOUL.

Represented, by an Intercourse of Letters, to the Right Honourable the Lady LETICE, Countess of *Falkland*, in her Life-Time.

Published for the Benefit and Ease of all who labour under SPIRITUAL AFFLICTION.

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To the Pious Reader.

Christian Reader,

THESE LETTERS, *with their* ANSWERS, *are a Representation of the* Comforts *and* Sorrows *of a* Devout Soul. *And in them the Writer takes the Liberty of a* Representor, *not only to disguise the Person to whom he writes, but also to heighten, here and there, the Matter of which he writes: That one and the same Soul should be To-day on the Top of Mount* Tabor, *(in excess of Comfort,) and To-morrow on the Top of Mount* Calvary, *(in the Bitterness of Sorrow,) though it be somewhat extraordinary, yet such there have been, and are. But happily you are one of them, who walk in the plain, low Way; unacquainted with Heights and Depths: And though so, in this Representation you may see, the various Dispensations of God; and from it you may learn (however God hath been pleased to deal with you heretofore, or however he shall be pleased to deal with you hereafter) to be fervent in Spirit, and to be zealous unto the End; for which you have the constant Prayers of him, who is*

Your Servant in

Christ Jesus.

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The Returns of Spiritual Comfort and Grief in a Devout Soul.

LETTER I.

Upon the Soul's Constancy and Frequency in Holy Duties; her Comforts in them are represented.

SIR,

I SHOULD be not only unthankful, but uncivil, if I give you not account of my state and condition, since our last abode together.

With humble thanks to God, for his grace and goodness, towards me, premised, thus it is. Your spiritual directions I have observed as punctually as I could: I am present at all public assemblies, in the house of God, and bear my part constantly in that solemn worship of his name. And to these public devotions, I add private prayers with my family, morning and evening, and to them, secret,

my closet, and these duties I perform constantly; for I remember you told me, that that strict precept of the apostle, *pray continually*, hath not ordinarily a more qualified sense than this, observe your set-times of prayer, constantly, without intermission.

NEITHER am I less constant at sermons and catechisings, and at the holy sacrament of our most blessed Lord's body and blood; though I cannot be so frequent at these duties; those I can hear but once a week, this I can receive but once a month. And on days of humiliation, I labour to intermix more earnest, as well as more frequent prayers, for the public necessities, and for mine own private wants; endeavouring to observe the ordinary, and extraordinary fasts of the church, as strictly as my weak body, and my weaker flesh will give me leave.

AND that which I relate all this for, which I dare not divulge to others, nor conceal from you, is this: my exceeding great *delight* in these spiritual exercises; while I hear, or read, I taste much *sweetness* in the promises of the gospel; and while I pray, or meditate, I receive much *comfort and delight*; my soul is filled, as it were, with *marrow and fatness*, and my heart is almost ravished with *spiritual joy*.

Now and then I compare the former pleasures *and delights*, I had in worldly things, at court, *with these I now* enjoy, and I account them all

as drofs and dung in comparifon of thefe; and, if it were capital in the judicial law for any one to have a perfume in his houfe like to that of the tabernacle, *Exod.* 30. *ult.* furely he is not guiltlefs who fancies any true fweetnefs, or delight, any where, but in the tabernacle: no perfume can be made, nor ought to be thought fo fweet, fo fragrant, fo excellent as this; no delights, or comforts in our own houfes, or in king's courts either, comparable to thefe of the *tabernacle*, and *temple of God.*

Now I mifs thofe opportunities I had at court, and at the cathedral church; either of thofe places afforded publick prayers thrice every day, and lectures alfo on the week days; nay, it is not here fo well with me as it was when you and I lived together in that country village, where the good parfon had morning and evening prayer in the parifh church, *twice* a day continually; where I now live we have this advantage of public prayer, only on the Lord's-day, and its eve, and on holy-days, and their eve's, and on wednefday's and friday's, our wonted littany-days; now I find not that other analogy between our prayers, and that incenfe and perfumes of the tabernacle, that as thefe, fo thofe were offered up daily: however, the *fweetnefs* of them is it I fpeak of, which I have moft plentifully from them.

And now upon the fenfe and feeling of the *joys and comforts* in the fervice of God, I am c

 fir

firmed in hope that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate me from the *love of God*, and of his service and worship; but as I have begun, so I shall (by God's grace) persevere in it, to my lives end; for which I pray daily, and do also desire your prayers, for him who is,

Your's in the Lord.

The ANSWER.

Sheweth the special favour of God, affording at the first beginning of a Devout Life, both sensible and spiritual Consolations.

SIR,

YOUR's I received, and rejoice with you, for the *comforts and joys you find in the service of God*, and for your diligence in holy duties, and exercises of devotion: you now taste and see the goodness of the Lord, that in keeping of his commandments, there is exceeding *delight and joy*, *Psal.* 19. not only *comfort* laid up for it hereafter, but also *comfort* in it here; *even such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared, even*

in

in this world, (for of ſuch the apoſtle ſpeaks in that place) *for ſuch as love him.* 1 *Cor.* ii. 9. ſo that virtue and piety is an excellent great reward to itſelf: and yet that which is, before us hereafter, is infinitely beyond this; for if there be ſuch *pleaſures in the kingdom of grace*, how unſpeakably tranſcendent are thoſe laid up for us, in the kingdom of glory?

NOTWITHSTANDING there is ſomewhat ſpecial in the goodneſs and wiſdom of God, affording ſuch *comforts and delights* unto you at this your firſt ſetting forth in this ſpiritual race. And it is this.

THAT you may perceive and that preſently, what *advantage* you have gained by the change of your life; and that thereupon you may ſtrenthen your reſolution more and more of continuing in this pious courſe, of running to the end of the race, that you may obtain that prize of *endleſs joy and comfort*: for you confeſs yourſelf a great gainer already, having in poſſeſſion *gold* inſtead of *braſs*, *ſilver* for *lead*, *ſpiritual* delights and pleaſures for *worldly* and *carnal*; inſtead of huſks (fit only for ſwine) in a *ſtrange country*, you have *goodly proviſion* (a fatted calf) and this attended with mirth and muſick, in your *father*'s houſe.

OH! let not an eye roll, nor a thought ſtray back again towards that ſtrange country of Egypt, towards the onions and fleſh-pots there; now *you are ſo fully* ſatisfied and delighted with this

manna from heaven! and if at any time you ſhould not taſte the true ſweetneſs of this, yet let not the falſe pleaſures of the other be once thought on by you; this I intreat not without ſome vehemency, and earneſtneſs: for I muſt tell you that

ALL ſuch comfort and delight, as you ſeem to ſpeak of, is not ſpiritual, nor laſting; in theſe holy exerciſes (of faſting, praying, meditating, hearing Sermons, and receiving the bleſſed Sacrament and ſuch like) there is an outward and ſenſible comfort, as well as an inward and ſpiritual comfort; and thoſe ſenſible conſolations (as they are called) not ſo laſting and permanent, as theſe inward comforts are: conſider this, I pray, and examine whether your comforts be inward and ſpiritual, or outward and ſenſible comforts only, or whether you abound with both: in the mean while I ſhall remember you with *David*'s prayer (for a people exalted with joy and comfort in God's ſervice) that the Lord God would keep this joy for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of your heart, 1 *Chr.* XXIX. 18. and eſtabliſh your heart thereby, unto himſelf. Thus deſiring your prayers for me, I commend you to God's protection and reſt,

Your ſervant in our Lord and Maſter
JESUS CHRIST.

LET

LETTER II.

The increase of Consolations in a pious Soul.

SIR,

THE Lord heareth your prayers for me, and answereth them graciously; for my delights and joys in the performance of all holy duties encrease more and more: At the receiving of the blessed sacrament my heart is still more enlarged, and more elevated with heavenly comforts; and at solemn humiliations my voice sometimes fails me, by reason of my groans and sighs: I seldom rise from my knees, (on those days,) but I see the floor watered with my tears; and even these tears are full of comfort and pleasantness.

I WAS wont to object against this course of strict life; that it was full of heavinesS and dulness; no *comforts* at all in it: but now I perceive, as S. *Augustine* saith in the like case, *Vos habuistis* Deum, *& gavisi estis gaudio magno, etsi ego non habui Oculus*; Ye had your *comforts* and *rejoicings*, though I had not eyes to *discern* them: Now I bless God that mine eyes are open, and I taste and see how gracious the Lord is, and *that he bestows* wonderful *comforts* on them wh *serve him.*

A

AND therefore I bless God who openeth his hand wide, and poureth out plentifully his *comforts* upon me: And so much the more must I praise him for this goodness of his, towards me, because (as you inform in your letter) these *comforts* are not common to all ranks of holy Christians, but to *beginners* chiefly; yea, and many there are, (it seems) who both begin, and continue on, without them; and this special goodness and mercy of God, bestowing such *comforts* and *mercies* on *me*, which he denies to *many* of His servants, who are more forward in holiness than I, requires my spiritual praise and thanks to Him.

BUT that clause in your letter of *spiritual and sensible consolations*, I do not clearly apprehend; how, (I pray) can there be *sensible* consolations in *inward* and spiritual things? Mine acquaintance with these consolations is so young, that I cannot well distinguish between the one and the other. Neither can I think I want *either* of them, and shall still hope, that they will be *both* constant with me: But if you please to instruct me more fully, in these *spiritual* and those *sensible consolations*, plowing with your own heifer, I shall resolve myself, and answer you. And so I commend you to God, and rest

Your's in the Lord.

The

The ANSWER.

How to discern between spiritual and sensible Consolations.

SIR,

I AM most ready to satisfy your desire; and shall explain my meaning more fully, before I propound my question.

THERE is, in the soul of man, an *upper* region and a *lower* region; I mean a rational, and a sensitive part. The upper and rational part of the soul consists of the understanding and the will, the reasonable faculties.

THE lower, or sensitive part of the soul, consists of the imagination and memory, &c. the sensitive faculties of the soul, or the inward senses; And though the soul of man be immaterial and spiritual, and wholly rational, yet those operations of hers, which are immediately by those inward (as well as those by our outward) senses, are, properly enough called, the operations or acts of the sensitive soul.

AND, answerable to these two parts of the soul, there are *spiritual*, and there are sensible consolations: They which are in the upper and ration part of the soul (the understanding and the wi

are moſt properly called ſpiritual; And they which are in the lower and ſenſitive part of the ſoul, (the phantaſy or imagination) though they be concerning ſpiritual things, are, properly enough called *ſenſible conſolations.*

And theſe ſeveral Conſolations are intimated to us by that of the Pſalmiſt; *My heart and my fleſh delight in the Lord.* Pſal. lxxxiv. 2. And the loſs of both theſe in that other place, where the Pſalmiſt complains, *My heart and my fleſh faileth.* Pſal. lxxiii. 26.

Now, when our underſtanding and our will are filled with theſe ſpiritual comforts, in the exerciſe of holy duties, there is little doubt, but that they are raiſed and alſo cheriſhed by the Holy Spirit of God, working upon the ſoul; Either *immediately*, the bleſſed Spirit caſting his Beams of comfort directly upon thoſe reaſonable faculties of the ſoul; or *mediately*, the Spirit ſhining firſt and directly upon the outward ſenſes, or upon the inward, the phantaſy and imagination, and from thence reflecting ſome luſtre upon the higher faculties, the will and underſtanding.

And ſo theſe outward ſenſible conſolations, are ſometimes wrought in us by the bleſſed Spirit, immediately and directly working upon the imagination, and that in ſo great a meaſure, that ſhe can convey a good part of her comforts up *to the reaſonable faculties*; yet otherwiſe theſe *ſenſible conſolations* in the imagination, (and ſo

more

more outwardly,) are only mediately from the bleſſed Spirit, who adminiſters oftentimes ſuch plenty of comfort to the will and underſtanding, that thence it deſcends down unto theſe neighbouring parts and faculties: Thus one while the miſtreſs (reaſon) is ſo full of joy, that ſhe calls her ſervants and neighbours, (the imagination and outward man) to rejoice with her; and otherwhile the ſervant is ſo full, that her miſtreſs partakes with her; and ſo the whole houſe (upper and lower region) is filled with joy.

And yet, a time there is, (of joy too) when it is not ſo plentiful; the miſtreſs rejoicing, and the ſervants no-way partaking of it; or the ſervants rejoicing, and the miſtreſs having no ſhare in it: joy there may be in the upper, not in the lower; or in the lower, not in the upper region: When it is, as the woman's leaven, (a little, in a great lump) neither of them can diffuſe their joy, and communicate it to the other.

And upon this ground it is, that I move my queſtion, ſeeing there may be joy and comfort in the *inward* man, the will and the underſtanding, and none in the *outward*; and on the contrary, there may be joy in the *outward* man (the imagination or ſo) and none at all, *above*; It will be very material to reſolve yourſelf at leaſt, of which *ſort* your comforts are.

Especially conſidering that thoſe joys above *in the will* and underſtanding, are more joyo

and delightful far, than those in the imagination or lower: And as more delightful, so also, more certain and constant, will abide longer with you than the other; spiritual than sensible consolations.

Now, though you tell me you have both; that you want nothing that is called comfort, yet your sensible consolations seem to me, to be most predominant in you; and that which inclines me thus to think is, your expressions concerning sighs and tears, and the like, which are in the sensitive and lower part of the soul.

And these *outward sensible consolations* are of two sorts, as you imply: Either such as are comfortable and joyous in themselves, when the mouth is filled as it were with laughter, the face anointed with oil, and the whole outward man danceth with chearfulness: Or else, such as are uncomfortable in themselves, but do instantly bring forth the fruit of comfort and joy, as sighs, and groans and tears; all which proceed from grief, and therefore are not joyous in themselves, yet have joy and comfort presently resulting from them: though not comfort in them, yet comfort comes with them, and therefore they also are called Consolations.

And Sir, though you now abound with these sensible consolations, yet be pleased to think of *scarcity* and *want*, and to prepare for that time. *Though you have now* a most pleasant serenity in *your soul, yet clouds* may appear, I fear, and darken it.

it; nay, I cannot promise, that you shall be secure from *storms* and *tempests*: My prayer therefore for you shall be, that among the manifold changes of this life, you may never want those *true* spiritual joys of God, to whose grace I commend you, who am, in Him,

Your Servant.

LETTER III.

Representeth those sensible Consolations decreasing, and the pious Soul troubled thereat.

SIR,

YOUR fore-warning was a *presage* too, and it is already come to pass; my *joy* is turned into *heavinesS*, and *comforts* into *grief*; summer is past, and tempestuous winter is come upon me; the light, the light of God's countenance is witheld from me, and darkness, Egyptian darkness compasseth me round about, so that I go mourning all the day long.

HERETOFORE I took great *delight* in the service and worship of God; my prayers were refreshments, *yea*, banquets to me; my Fasts and Humiliations, as corn and wine, did feast and che my heart; By reading or hearing God's wo

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The ANSWER.

Directeth some means how the pious Soul may regain those sensible Consolations; or if not, reasons alledged why she should satisfy herself without them.

SIR,

YOUR's I received, and as I rejoiced before with you when you did rejoice, so now I mourn with you who mourn; and to take off some part of the grief from you, and myself I embrace the first opportunity of writing that I might in the beginning of your malady apply somewhat for it.

You aggravate your *present grief* and sadness, by reflecting much upon your *former comforts* and delights, which is in effect to put those comforts into the wrong scale: they should serve to counter-poize your present sorrow and dryness; not to weigh *with* them in *one* and the *same* scale, but to weigh *against* them in the *other*: and your argument should be as *Job*'s; *I have received good things at the hand of God, and shall I not receive evil?* I have had a very liberal portion of the sweetness of the honey for some years together, and shall I think much to taste of a little wormwood and bitterness, for a few days? If you

put

at in one ſcale, this in the other, it will be eaſe to you.

r for the particular malady which you com- of, I can but güeſs what your diſeaſe is; and ieſs amiſs, what I preſcribe I revoke before- ; only if I find out your diſeaſe, you may r my directions for the cure, or the eaſe of it. this beginning of your *Diſquiet*, I ſhall pre-

That you want only thoſe *ſenſible Conſo-* s, not thoſe *ſpiritual*; thoſe in the *lower* of the ſoul, the ſenſitive faculties, not theſe *upper* faculties, of the will and underſtand-

and therefore your firſt taſk will be, to ler, whether theſe ſenſible and outward con- ons fail you, by reaſon of ſome natural cauſe irſelf; your body not ſo fitly diſpoſed now eive the *impreſſions* of joy, nor the imagi- i to form them, as formerly: or by ſome -natural cauſe, God withdrawing theſe ſen- :onſolations from you.

OWEVER, whether the cauſe be natural or -natural, the diſeaſe brings the ſoul to a great of perplexity and diſquiet, and afterwards langerous hazards, and therefore ſome di- ns I ſhall preſcribe.

OIN (it is beſt) with ſomewhat *inwardly*. eas you complain of your heavineſs in holy , prepare youtſelf for them more ſolemnly ordinarily, with a moſt ſerious meditation of *to whom*, and in whoſe preſence, you are

form those duties; Make some impression in your heart of his most glorious majesty and most dreadful presence; and quicken this your meditation by recounting his infinite goodness, and mercy; and specify his mercies to your own soul; and this will dispose you, I hope, to that *enlargement of heart*, and *tenderness*, which you complain you want, the *outward expressions of love.*

If not, then to a sadder meditation upon the severe justice and righteousness of God, reflecting all that while upon your own vileness, and upon the bitterness of those punishments which you have deserved; the due consideration of this, will conduce much to those other *outward* expressions of grief and sorrow.

Represent God to yourself, as a most merciful Father, as a most severe Judge, and as a most glorious and powerful King, and surely either Love, or Grief, or Fear, will bring forth some of your wonted *sensible Consolations.*

And then present your supplications to that glorious, that merciful, that just God, and beseech him for this *tenderness of spirit.*

And with these *inwards*, apply *outwardly*, Reverent prostrations, humbly falling down and kneeling before his dreadful Majesty, smiting *your breast*, with the publican, and then lifting *up your hands* and your eyes unto heaven; and *to your other* Devotions, which, though secr

with yourself alone, yet, if vocal (in this case) you will be more likely to be affected outwardly at them: to which you may add, singing of spiritual songs, both with voice and instrument;—1 SAM. xvi. 23. 2 KINGS iii. 16. you may read of great matters, helped forward (to say the least) with music and instruments.

THESE and some such other means *outwardly* applied, will, I doubt not, restore you (by the mercy of God) to your former health and comfort: neither inward nor outward means must be neglected; not *inward*, because these *comforts* are the gift of God, and must be obtained by prayer; not these outward, because the *Consolations* which you labour to regain, are *outward* and *sensible*, and therefore probably to be moved and stirred up in us, by our *outward* actions, and deportment of body.

OTHER means to this purpose, you may read of in your books, and some you may suggest to yourself; for you best know your own temper of body and soul, and therefore can prompt yourself what may be fit to be done, especially if you can recollect, what thoughts and imaginations were wont to raise them in you, then you will use those again, as a ready means to recover them.

BUT if, notwithstanding all these means used, *you continue still* in this state of dryness and barrenness, *and* are no ways able to regain your f

mer consolations, be not, I pray, so much dejected (as you seem) for want of them, for this is to disquiet yourself in vain.

IN vain, I say, because you cannot add one cubit to your stature, your solicitousness cannot help you; nay, this disquiet pulls you lower still and lower; It is so far from exalting you towards comfort, that it depresses you with deeper sadness and grief; it thickens the darkness, not dispels it.

BUT chiefly it is in vain, because these sensible consolations are not *tanti*; Good and profitable they are because they make us cheerful and plentiful in the work of the Lord; but they are not so good, nor so absolutely profitable, as that you should be so sorely dismayed and dejected for the loss and want of them. And this is a chief thing in this subject of consolations, and most seriously to be considered.

DEVOTION doth not consist in these outward and sensible consolations, but in a ready, active will and purpose, to conform ourselves inwardly and outwardly to the holy pleasure and commands of God, and as occasion is given, executing the will of God, and obeying his laws; this, this is pure devotion. The outward comforts (we speak of) are brought forth by this, this is the Mother, they are but Daughters: and they are cherished by this too, as the daughter by the mother; however, sometimes it comes to pass, that

that as dutiful daughters, they comfort and relieve the languiſhing mother; Devotion, (the mother itſelf) is otherwhile ſupported by theſe conſolations.

SEEING then, the main and chief part of Devotion may be in the ſoul of man, without the *ſenſible feeling* and *outward* comfort of it, if we have the *principal*, let us be therewith content: if this be preſent, though the other be abſent, it is not ſo deeply to be bewailed. There are, I perſuade myſelf, many Saints, in a high degree of glory in heaven, who never taſted here of theſe *outward Conſolations*.

IT is a common error to think, that thoſe exerciſes of God's worſhip, which we perform with theſe *outward* conſolations, are alway more acceptable to God, than thoſe which affect us not this way.

To us indeed they are moſt acceptable, becauſe of the delight which we have in ſuch ſoftneſs and tenderneſs of heart; but thoſe we perform in the dryneſs of our ſouls, may be as acceptable to God, as theſe; for God, who looks upon both inward and outward man, regards the *heart* and *ſpiritual* parts, more than the *bodily* and the *ſenſitive* parts.

YEA, oftentimes theſe are more acceptable to God, than thoſe; and the reaſon of it is this: Thoſe prayers and holy duties which we perform in our dryneſs, (notwithſtanding we want the

comfort of them) are presumed to proceed from a more vigorous will: That heart is more fully set upon the discharge of these duties, which performs them *without* these *outward comforts*, than that which performs them only *with* them: Here is no stream of comfort to carry you on in your duties, and if, notwithstanding you go on as fast and as firm as if there were, your heart is full of vigour and active resolution, and therefore they are most acceptable to God, and argue a very great love of God, and of his service.

WHEREFORE, if all means being used to *keep* or to *recover* these sensible consolations, you speed not, be not dejected at it; but in that case, resign yourself and your desires and delights wholly to God; if he pleases to afford them, use them, and improve yourself as much as may be, by them; if God still denies them, improve yourself without them, and though *outward* comforts decay, yet let the *inward* abound in you; which you may most probably effect, if you continue resolute and constant in all holy exercises of Religion, and perform them all as duly as heretofore, tho' now you have no sweetness nor pleasant taste in them. For which I commend you to the mercy and grace of God, in whom I am,

Your servant.

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LETTER IV.

Representeth the pious soul wholly deprived of sensible consolations; and spiritual consolations decreasing in her.

SIR,

I Apply myself to no other ghostly director, and thereupon your trouble returns so quick: I thank you for your last letters, whereby I perceive that you have found out my disease, and therefore I was most diligent in observing your prescriptions; the bitterest pill is that in your last line, that I should be as constant and as full, in my devotions and exercises of holy duties in this my dryness and barrenness, as ever I was heretofore amidst my greatest comforts and consolations. This seems a very hard duty, and (to return your own expression) as difficult, as to sail without a stream, yea, and without wind too, as fast as with it: I have no stream of comfort at all in my devotions to set me forward, and a spirit less calm, or rather, a heavy load of dullness and drowsiness to retard me, and yet I must make as quick a dispatch, as when I had no such impediment against me, and a full stream for me: Yet for these late weeks, I have set myself strictly to *observe that*, and your other directions; but *alas, Sir, the* more I struggle with my disease,

more it increaſeth upon me; My God ſheweth me not the light of his countenance, but hideth his face more and more from me.

I WAS driven from the land of Canaan, where I had an affluence of milk and honey, a full and conſtant poſſeſſion of *heavenly comforts*, yet for a while I was ſuffered to abide, as on the mountain of *Piſgah*, where, though I had not that *meaſure*, nor that *conſtantneſs* of comforts a before, yet a *glimpſe* now and then of that Canaan was afforded to me; but now it is far worſe with me, I ſeem confined to a low *valley*, whence I cannot eſpy the leaſt part of that Canaan; no degree of heavenly comfort allowed me; and therefore, Sir, I have reaſon to conclude that this is a deſertion not only of *outward ſenſible conſolation*, but alſo of *inward* and *ſpiritual*; my ſufferings abound *outwardly*, and no conſolations *inwardly*; the reaſonable faculties of my ſoul, my underſtanding and my will, want their wonted light and joy.

YEA, while I relate it, this *ſpiritual deſertion* grows upon me; and though the other day, it was but a partial privation of comfort, the degrees of joy abated only in me, yet now it is a total privation of joy and comfort, for I am wholly bereft both of ſenſible and ſpiritual conſolation; my ſenſitive and my reaſonable faculties, all of them, full of darkneſs, and dullneſs, and barrenneſs; and therefore, Sir, I beſeech you diſpatch me further directions to

Your languiſhing friend.

The ANSWER.

Distinguisheth between a desertion of grace and of comfort, and that this may be inflicted by God in love, on the best saints on earth; and for what reasons.

SIR,

YOUR's I received, and think not strange that your disease should continue, yea, increase upon you.

THERE is a spiritual desertion of *grace*, and a spiritual desertion of *comfort*: The first, when God withdraws his *holy spirit* and divine grace from us, for some notorious sin committed against him. This latter, when he withdraws only the *joy* and *comfort* of that grace which is still with us.

AND this latter kind of *spiritual desertion*, may be in the best saints of God upon earth; I may desire, but I cannot hope, (upon good grounds) any of them should be alway freed from it.

Now, Sir, this spiritual desertion of comfort, is inflicted upon us, one while in God's displeasure: we neglect those comforts too much, or by some other sin or infirmity, we provoke God to withhold in those mercies, and to withhold them from us.

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OTHERWHILE they may be withdrawn by God, and yet not in his displeasure; the Sun of righteousness may be as bright behind the cloud, though not so evident to us; God's countenance may shine towards you, when it is thus intercepted from us.

Now whether God hath withdrawn these comforts from you in his *displeasure* against you, as a punishment for some sin, or otherwise, I cannot pretend to discover; upon examination of yourself, you will be able to discover it, and to inform yourself. And if it shall appear to you that this *desertion* is not inflicted upon you in displeasure, then, though both sensible and spiritual consolations be denied you, and that totally, you need no salve (I trow) for that *sore*: It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his sight.

IF thus, you may happily discover some greater mercies coming towards you, with this your *dryness* and *barrenness*. This *spiritual desertion* may be inflicted upon you, either *Ob charitatis profectum*, as an incentive to love; God will hereby stir up a greater love in your soul, towards him, then formerly. He takes away these comforts from you because you loved them too much; and he would abate your love towards these *comforts*, that it might be bestowed more fully upon the *comforter* himself: If God will not have any love of yours run waste *upon consolations*, but elevate it all to *himself*,

you

you have no more reason to complain, then the child, from whom the nurse is withdrawn, that the mother might gain its chiefest affections: Or supposing God bestowed comforts (especially those sensible) on you, because of the infirmity of your condition, but now hath strengthned you to subsist without them, you have no more reason to complain, then the *cripple* that is healed, for the lots of his *crutches.*

Or secondly, this *spiritual desertion* may be inflicted upon you *Ob humilitatis custodiam*, as a preservative against pride; that humility may grow more in you; a *thorne* in the flesh, lest you should be exalted above measure with the abundance of heavenly *consolations*; and if so, who will complain though the honey, and the honeycomb, be taken away from him, when he hath eaten sufficient, and is in danger to surfeit by the rest?

Or for some other special virtue, which God will now convey into your soul. Thus some spiritual advantage you may hope to gain, by this your desertion.

But on the other side, if upon examination, it appears or be probable, that God hath withdrawn these *consolations* from you in *displeasure*, then you know your task is to enquire into your self, for what sin, or neglect, and omission it is, that God is so displeased with you; and, when that is discovered, an unfained humiliation for it,

and an earneſt *endeavour* againſt it, for the time to come, is required at your hands.

YET, after this *examination*, if you remain ſtill doubtful of the true cauſe of your *deſertion*, ſo that you cannot reaſonably enjoin yourſelf, a *ſpecial* humiliation for any particular ſin, as the actor, or acceſſory in it, a *general* humiliation for your ſins, and corruptions, will certainly advantage you, and may probably eaſe you, in this your preſent condition. And to this examination, together with that particular (if you find cauſe) or this general humiliation, I now leave you, earneſtly praying that by theſe, or ſome other means, you may be healed, and ſin no more.

Sir, I am

Your ſervant in our Lord Jeſus.

LETTER V.

The pious ſoul lamenteth the loſs of her comforts, as taken away in God's diſpleaſure; and propoſeth an abatement of worldly comfort, as a means to recover ſpiritual.

SIR,

UPON a *view* of my actions ſince the laſt ſolemn *humiliation* of my ſoul, I *find* many defects and failings; and *though* I cannot charge myſelf with

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any one notorious sin unrepented of, (blessed be God my upholder) yet while I am compassed about with so many infirmities and imperfections, negligences and ignorances, I cannot but fear, too probably, that for some of those it is, that God in *displeasure* withdraws, those his *comforts* from me.

And can there be a greater heart-sore than this? that my dearest *comforts*, should be taken away, yea driven away, from myself, by myself! that I myself should be so deeply accessory to all these *desertions* I complain of! that I myself shou'd quench those holy *fires*, and then complain for want of the warmth and comfort of them! that I should provoke God to hide his face, and to withdraw the light of his countenance from me which I value infinitely more then all the pleasures, and profits, and honours of this world!

And now if I be constrained to dwell in this *Mesech*, and to have my habitation in these dark tents of *Kedar*, what will my life profit me? I will not return to the pleasures of the world, and what is my life then, if these *pleasures* of heaven return not unto me?

Lord, can I not see thy face, and enjoy the light of thy countenance, constantly, and live? is it not far better for me then to die with it, than to live without it! therefore I will still seek thy *face, thy face* Lord will I seek. Oh let me see *it, and enjoy* it again, though I die for it!

if it be thy will, my God and my Lord, that I walk all the days of my life in this *darkness*, that with these disconsolate fears and tremblings I work out my salvation, lo I am ready to do thy will O God!

Now, *sir*, for the particular account you may expect from me of mine *examination* of myself, I must not conceal from you, that I have some jealousiēs that worldly mindedness may be shrewdly accessory to this my *desertion*: I am too busily (I fear) imployed in the things of this world, to have and retain that portion of heavenly comfort; I traffick too much on this side *Jordan*, to have those sweets of the land of *Canaan*.

That of our Apostle, 2 *Tim.* ii. 4. *Nemo militans Deo*; no man that warreth under God, entangleth himself with the affairs of this world, is not I conceive proper to the clergy, and divines, but a general rule for all christians also; whosoever fights under Christs banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil, must not be entangled with the things of this life. And though, *sir*, I cannot charge myself with sin in this kind, being entangled beyond the bounds of lawfulness with earthly things, yet I consider, that my worldly employments, though lawful, may not be expedient; for I have read in my books of *devotion*, that whosoever takes his full lawful *pleasure in the things* of this world, to such an *one, God* (commonly, and most justly) denies th

the extraordinary pleasures and delights of his spirit; and one way prescribed, not to be scanted in these *spiritual comforts*, is by abating somewhat of the full lawful measure of these *worldly comforts*. This I fear, may be one reason why God withdraws his wonted spiritual *comforts* from me.

If I could abridge myself a little more of that delight I take in the study of history, and philosophy, and the like, if I could abate some little of that comfort I solace myself with, in friends and children; If I could be a little more straitened in these *worldly comforts*, I should well hope to be enlarged again, in those *spiritual comforts*: I shall therefore labour to satisfy myself with some few *omers* of worldly joy, though an *ephah* be but a lawful measure; who knoweth but God may turn my former *omer* of spiritual *joy*, into an *ephah*, and give it me, heaped up, and running over? I read of some who have sped thus by it, and therefore I shall hope for the like mercy from God, and this hope is some support to

Your fainting friend.

The ANSWER.

Adviſeth to love the comforter himſelf more t the comforts.

SIR,

YOU delight (it ſeems) in *corro* (as moſt in your condition do) m then in *cordials*; you inſiſt only u God's *diſpleaſure* againſt you, in king away your conſolations, not at all reflect upon the *cordial*, that theſe may be taken a in *love*.

YEA, though God be offended with you your many failings and imperfections; yet offended God (however it is with an offen friend) may afflict in *love*. Now after you h caſt down your ſoul by humiliation, raiſe it I pray, by the meditation of this. Your lo that moſt precious and excellent affection of y ſoul, ſhall by this deſertion, be advanced to G and appropriated to him alone. Now you how weak that Love is, when we love God ly or chiefly for that parcel of mercy or com which he is pleaſed to communicate to us; that the *ſtrength* of love is, to love that infi *mercifulneſs*, and incomprehenſible goodn *that is in him*; to love God more for that *in himſelf*, than for theſe few *drops* he ſheds

m us; for his own goodness, more than for benefit or comfort by it: this, this is the ngth of love. And if your former comforts lred you from this love of God, your present rtion may further you to it; and when it ı strengthened your love, it will increase r humility also; God's chearful countenance ards you may unhappily exalt you, but you ıot but walk humbly before a frowning God: l where this love, and this humility is, pa-ce will have its perfect work. Which I speak rather of, because this drought and barren-of our souls, may, through the corruption ur nature and temptation of the Devil, occa-some impatience in us. As an antidote, efore, against impatience, I beseech you to ider, that there are many dear children of l, who never tasted at all of those comforts, reof you have had store; and then you will your complaints for the present want of them praises for your former enjoyment of them; after that hymn of thanksgiving, you may : your meditations and devotions with a Col-ot two, that God would call to remembrance ender mercies and his loving kindness which ath shewed to you heretofore; in which I be a joint-suitor with you, but especially ll *spiritual graces* which are needful for you, o I rest *Your's in our Lord Christ.*

LETTER VI.

The pious soul still lamenteth the loss of her comforts, yet wholly resigneth her desires of them to God's will.

SIR,

I Peruse your directions daily, for I am still in my *disconsolate* condition; My *dryness*, my *dryness*, woe is me! I cannot dissemble it. Those *comforts* have held up my weary hands in prayer, they have strengthened my feeble knees; in the publick congregation, in my private closet, meditating in the field, and on my bed; at all times, and upon all occasions, they have been my companions, and my supporters also. They have made me more forward in christian duties, more cheerful in them, and more plentiful of them, than otherwise I fear I should have been; but now they have all forsaken me, and I am left weak alone: How freely could I resign up myself to God, and his service? when I considered it only as a yielding up myself to a continual affluence of heavenly comforts and pleasures: How easy was it for me to despise the delights and vanities of this world, when I abound with those? Who can part with such bosom-friends, who have been *so helpful* and beneficial to me, and not com-

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plain ?- The loſs of the pleaſure and delight I took in them was grievous, but this loſs of help and aſſiſtance from them is an heavy burden.

But theſe very helps and advantages which I have had by *Conſolations*, may come, you have told me, without them; yea, ſometimes theſe their proper works may be performed better without them than with them: And that is it I enquire after now. I bleſs God that he hath afforded me the comfort and help of thoſe pleaſures thus far onward in my way, and I truſt to him now for other guides and helps.

And hereupon I reſolve, God's grace aſſiſting me, to caſt off my ſolicitous and anxious care about them: Deſire them I ſhall, and ſeek them, becauſe I can be helped by them, but after that, if I find them not, I ſhall not complain ſo loud, becauſe I truſt to be helped without them; and I ſhall cloſe thoſe Collects, you adviſe to, for theſe conſolations, with *Non mea, ſed tua fiat voluntas, Domine.* Not mine, O Lord, but thy will be done: for though I be denied them, yet in my dryneſs will I continue my ſervice (ſuch as it is) to thee my God, and by thy grace perſevere in it to my life's end. For the performance of which I deſire the benefit of your prayers, whereby you ſhall ſtill oblige

Your engaged friend.

The Answer.

A Caution, lest the soul, being now indifferent whether she hath comfort or not, should prove slothful in holy duties.

Sir,

I Beseech God to strengthen you in your humble and free submission unto his blessed will; and though he still hide his countenance from you, yet you promise to serve him, to bring him what your dullness and barrenness will allow to have and from him you shall receive what you have not: if not your former, yet some other helps and supplies; yea, the Lord himself will be your companion and your guide: cast all your care upon him, and he will take the full care of you: and if he leads you no further by the glimmering light of a *star*, (your own consolations and delights) it is, I hope, because he will shew you the bright lustre of the *sun* itself, that goodness and mercifulness which is in himself, and by that lead you and guide you to your journey's end.

And concerning those prayers and holy exercises which you perform to God in this your barrenness & drought, seeing they are not undertaken *at all for any* taste or sweetness you have in them, but

but purely to ſerve God, and merely and alone to perform his will, ſurely they are very acceptable in his ſight. I know this barrenneſs is ſeldom without objections againſt the performance of theſe duties, as if they might be as well left undone as done; but you will be able, I hope, to anſwer all theſe oppoſitions and contradictions, and force your will againſt your will, to go on ſtill in diſcharging thoſe holy duties, as well as you can and as chearfully, though not ſo well as you would.

THERE goes alway along with theſe our Conſolations, ſelf-love, and ſometimes too much of it too; it will concern us therefore to moderate it; to that purpoſe, when we propoſe to ourſelves the exerciſe of any duties, or the practice of any chriſtian virtues, our own intereſt, pleaſure or advantage (ſpiritual though they be) muſt be the leaſt thing we aim at, leſt ſelf-reſpects blemiſh all. And if thus, (though in the depth of deſertion) our love is more commendable, and thoſe duties and virtues more acceptable to God, for whoſe ſake wholly we perform them, than thoſe exerciſes and duties we formerly had ſo much comfort in; and upon this reaſon I ſtill adviſe you, not to ſet too high an eſteem upon theſe conſolations, your own delights.

YET, here I think fit to enter a Caveat or two *I have known Torpor* and *Acedia* in devotion, ar *ſluggiſhneſs* come under this vail; while we

tend not to affect these our own delights, *coldness* in our prayers, and *laziness* in our devotions too commonly creep in upon us. Take heed, therefore, that you retain your inward *fervor* and spiritual *zeal*, in the midst of your dryness and barrenness: You must beware lest you lose your fervor, as well as the sense and the comfort of it. Let not your intention and attention in your devotions any whit abate, if possibly you can prevent it, while your outward consolations are denied to you. It is a chief design the Devil hath upon us in these our desertions, to make us *weary* of the service of God, and to steal away from us, our devotions and our fervor too.

And now seeing you have attained (God be thanked) to such a condition and state, that you submit yourself wholly to God, and will be content, though he still withold these your consolations, this is a time, that the *Devil* is ordinarily busy to dart in his *temptations*; and if he can bring in, with this your *indifferency*, *oscitancy*, and *coldness*, in those services you perform, and a *laziness* in holy duties, he gains too much upon you.

A Second *caveat* I shall add, with respect to others rather then to yourself at present; that they who *abound* with these *comforts* be not too *secure*, *upon the* ground of consolations (especially if *they be sensible* ones only) that their persons, and *performances* are accepted with God, that th

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make not these the chief *trial* and testimony of their justification, and sanctification; the *testimony* of their faith and repentance cannot deceive them, these *consolations* may.

But all this is added, *ex super abundanti*; since your full *resignation* of your desires and delights to God, and your indifferency for these consolations, this advice might have been spared: nothing is now necessary from me, but my prayers to God for you, wherein I shall never fail you, for I am *Your servant in Christ Jesus.*

LETTER VII.

The soul feeleth (as he conceives) a partial privation of grace, and growing suspicious of the sincerity of his faith and repentance, feareth a total privation of grace in her.

Sir,

THAT intimation of yours, that your advice to me might be spared hereafter, hath these many months kept back my hand from writing to you, but now I can withold no longer, and your former trouble breaks in upon you.

Not that I have revoked my *resignation* of those my *consolations*, to God's blessed will, far be it from me; but in another manner, (as I con-

ceive) and of higher concernment, I now make my address to you, for *direction* and comfort.

THAT *total privation* of *comfort*, under which I have so long laboured, hath now at length brought on (I fear) a *partial* privation of *grace*. My sensible comforts are gone, and my spiritual comforts are still detained from me, and now I doubt that even grace itself is decaying too; *Joseph* is not, and *Simeon* is not, and shall I lose my *Benjamin* also? all these things are against me.

Sir, I have endeavoured what I could to keep my soul vigilant, and my affections erect and attend at prayers, (according to your caution to me) but now they are all slack, and a general *drowsiness* dulls them all at the hour of prayer, more than at any other time; at that spiritual, more than at any civil employments; and therefore I complain, that the *grace* of fervor and zeal is departed from me; and in other holy duties the chearfulness and ardor, I was wont to have, doth now wholly fail me.

WHEN I read of some of the servants of God, who were so elevated in their devotions and meditations, that whether in the body, or out of the body, God only knows, and then reflect upon mine, now a days so *heartless* and so dull, that whether with the soul, or without the soul, it is hard to say; that while I am at these holy exercises, *my soul should* be carried any whither, rather tha-

than into heaven, yea, downward, rather than upwards, this presseth me sore. How can such service be *reasonable* from me, who have a spiritual soul? or *acceptable* to God, who is a *spirit*, and must be worshiped in spirit? This I lament as a *privation* of that grace of fervor and zeal; my soul is not filled with it now, as formerly.

NEITHER may I dissemble it, sometimes I fear *worse*, even a *total* privation of this, and of all other *graces* and virtues; either that God hath withdrawn his holy graces from me, or else that I was never truly partaker of them; that I flattered and deceived myself, when I hoped that God had accepted my *faith* in Christ, and my *repentance* to my justification.

THE other day while I was judging myself for my sins, an *allegation* was cast in against my *repentance* also, and that was accused of *unsincerity* and *hypocrisy*; and proof was brought in of it; my *grief* and sorrow for my *sins*, was compared with my *sorrow* for *other* things; the small bottle of my penitential tears was brought forth and set by the bottle of my tears for worldly crosses; and when it appeared how enlarged I had been in these, and how straitned in those, that I have wept far more for the loss of a friend or of a pension for some years, than for the invaluable loss of my Lord God eternally; this plea was *prosecuted* against me with a great deal of im*portunity*, and though I myself was both i

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advocate and the judge in the case, yet I could not be so partial either in pleading or indetermining, as to acquit myself; but upon this *proof* and evidence was forced to condemn that *repentance* (mine own though it were) as feigned and unsincere, or incomplete at least, and therefore *unacceptable* in the sight of God.

And upon this, how *heavy* and sad my guilty soul is, cannot be expressed; since this my *Benjamin* is miscarried too, sorrow will soon bring me to the grave.

And then, when I am thus low, it is hard to keep myself from sinking lower; for *allegations* I find produced against my faith and love to God: and thus it is reasoned. If I have not true faith, all I have done yet is still *fruitless*, I am still in my *unregenerate* condition; but if I have not true *love* to God, I have not true *faith*, and if I have not *joy* in God, I have not *love* of him. These are fruits of the same *spirit*, and where *one* is, the *other* cannot be wanting; *Love* results naturally from *faith*, and *joy* from *love*, and they continually accompany each other; these fruits are always in a *cluster*: Or they are all links of one chain, if any one link be taken off, the chain is quiet broken: Seeing then apparently I want *joy*, how can I have *love*? and if I have no *love*, I am not better then a sounding *brass*, and a tinckling *cymbal*.

Alas,

ALAS *Sir*, I cannot alway keep these *allegations* against myself, out of the court of my conscience; and though I condemn myself very often, yet I dare not be too peremtory in these judgments against myself, for I cannot but hope better things: And whether I should cherish those fears (which are strong already) or these weaker hopes, is that, wherein I desire your advice and counsel; and the Lord who only knoweth the spirits of men, direct you in it: this is the prayer of *Your assured friend.*

The ANSWER.

Prescribeth a strict examination of her faith and repentance: and sheweth these fears and jealousies may be the temptations of the Devil.

SIR,

WHETHER you will take part with *fear* or *hope*, you yourself must resolve: yet somewhat I shall say, concerning the *fears* which arise in you, that you are not justified before God, nor reconciled to him.

IT is good to *fear* alway; it keeps us low, lest *pride* enter; and it keeps us active, lest *sloth* seize upon us; and so we humbly labour, to make our *calling* and *election* sure; and when I sadly consider

consider, how many miscarry through spiritual *security*, not at all suffering themselves to mistrust their condition towards God, I am not forward to cast out fear; Yet there is *torment* in fear, and a firm *hope* well grounded, (if it ejects not fear itself) will wholly allay the torment of it.

WHETHER your *faith* and *repentance* were as they ought to be, is between God and your own soul: But if your faith were lively with love, and trust in God, and your repentance unfeigned, assure yourself, it was no other spirit but the holy spirit of God (who can neither deceive us, nor can be deceived) who said unto your soul, *Christus est justitia tua, & salus tua*; Christ is thy justification, and thy salvation.

AND for the *plea* put in against your *repentance*, though I cannot discern what your repentance is, yet this I can discern, that your objection is no convincing argument against the truth and sincerity of it.

For though I must grant that the inward *sorrow* for *sin*, and the inward *sorrow* for *worldly* losses are both from the *heart*, and griefs both of the same kind, yet it will not follow, that they both should have the same outward expressions; for there may be an heart full of true sorrow for sin, where there is no sad countenance, no trembling lips, nor weeping eyes; these are the *overflowings of* grief in the *sensitive* parts, and are *more readily*, and more fully shewed by us, for worldly

worldly then for *spiritual* matters: and the reason is this; because these *sensitive* parts (whence they proceed) are more affected with bodily and worldly things, than they are, or can be, with spiritual and heavenly; and the reason of this is, because worldly things are near their sensitive parts; whereas spiritual are far off, and thereupon have a greater command over outward sensitive expressions, (as tears and the like) than spiritual things can have over them at a distance.

I desire, therefore, that you would examine your sorrow for sin, above, not beneath; at the spring-head of sorrow, your heart, and reasonable soul, not at these neather pools, your eyes, and the tears of them; by that you cannot easily be deceived, by these you may.

And if, upon examination, you find that *your* heart hath been, and is *truly* humbled for *your* sins, and afflicted at the remembrance of them; and doth also *firmly* resolve against them for the time to come; if *you* be *sorely displeased* both with the sinner and with the sin, abhorring *yourself* and *your* transgression, *you* may cherish and confirm *your* hopes, that God is reconciled to *you*, through Christ. If *you* can produce these rational testimonies, which are grounded upon the word of God, be not, I pray, *very* solicitous for the *testimony* of *your* sensitive faculties.

And after the examination of your sorrow for *sin, if you* think fit to be so strict with yourself

as to require that this your grief for ſin, ſhould exceed that your grief for worldly things, yet it is very unreaſonable, and againſt all rules of Courts, to condemn your ſorrow for ſin as defective, upon the bare teſtimony of theſe outward expreſſions; for as they are a ſingle witneſs, ſo (now it appears to you) they are a partial witneſs too. Inclining more to ſorrow for worldly things (and giving fuller evidence for them) than to ſorrow for ſpiritual things: and therefore 'till it be otherwiſe proved, and fully too, that your ſorrow for ſin is unſincere, paſs not, I pray, your ſentence of condemnation upon it.

And yet before you need acquit it, you may examine the neighbouring paſſions of your ſoul, about this very matter of *your reconciliation with God.* If there appear no *unſincerity* or *hypocriſy* in *your* love of God and in *your* hatred of ſin, *you* have little reaſon to ſuſpect *your* repentance: And for trial of the *ſincerity* of theſe paſſions, I pray ſuppoſe yourſelf in ſuch a ſtrait, *That you muſt either loſe houſes and poſſeſſions, wife, and children and honour, or the favour and love of God, by committing thoſe your former ſins again:* and then conſider, *which of theſe two you would chooſe:* and if you reſolve, (by the grace of God aſſiſting you) *to loſe all the profits, pleaſures, and comforts of this world, rather than the favour and love of God by a relapſe into ſin,* your love and hatred being thus ſincere and upright, you muſt

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In justice then acquit your repentance and sorrow from that aspersion of hypocrisy and unsincerity, and censure him for a slanderer who cast in that allegation against it.

And now for that other allegation against your faith and love, because of the absence of *joy*, I desire you to consider, that,

There is a *joy* which is the fruit of the spirit, and it constantly ariseth from faith in God, and love of him; and there is the fullness or superabundance of that *joy*; the first is as a small *ray* only; the second as a beam from the Sun of righteousness; and both these are the gifts of the blessed spirit, and yet very different; the first as a grace, the second as a reward; that *ray* of *joy* is a grace of God, and *by* the light of it we *may* keep our feet from stumbling and falling; this beam of *joy* is a reward from God, and *by* the exceeding lustre of it we are incouraged and cheared in our walking with God: and hence it appears that the first is a most *necessary* fruit of our faith and love, and doth *always accompany* them. We love him not unless we rejoice in him, and of this *joy* is the Apostle's precept, *Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice:* whereas this second is a bountiful expression of God's *extraordinary goodness* towards, not an *ordinary grace* in us; a fore-taste it is of the joys *of heaven*: The first is as the Christian soul's *daily bread*; this second as their festival cheer

Now, Sir, if you have that *daily bread*, you are of God's *houſhold* and *family*, though *you* ſeldom taſte of his feſtival cheer: and I hope *you* want *only* thoſe dainties which once *you* were fed with, and that this bread, which is common to all the *family*, is *your* ſoul's *daily food*; that *you* have ſtill in *you* a *ray* of *joy*, though not a *beam*; and if ſo, this *joy* is a good evidence of *your ſincerity* in *faith* and *love*; and therefore you may cenſure him alſo for a ſlanderer who caſt into the court of your conſcience, this allegation againſt your *faith in God*, and *love of him*.

THUS, Sir, I comfort myſelf with hope, that you neither flattered yourſelf heretofore, in accounting yourſelf reconciled to God through Chriſt, nor that there is ſuch a *total privation of grace* in you as you complain of.

AND for that *partial privation of grace*, the abatement of your *fervor* in prayer: in anſwer to that I ſhall premiſe, Firſt, That there is a *gift of prayer*, and a *ſpirit of prayer* or *ſupplications*; and many have the *gift* of prayer, (to expreſs their own, or other mens deſires to God in prayer *readily*, and in fit words) who have not the *ſpirit of prayer* and *ſupplications*, that is, *fervor* and *zeal*, and *ardency of ſpirit*; and, on the contrary, many have this grace of *fervor*, who have *not* that *gift of prayer*; and of this *ſanctifying grace*, *fervor* and *zeal* it is, as I conceive, the prophet *Zachary* ſpeaks, not of this gift of prayer, which is only an *edifying* grace.

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SECONDLY, that exact *intention* and perfect *fervor* with all our heart and all our mind in the whole worship of God, is a treasure, not ordinary in these earthen vessels; while we carry about this *body* of *flesh*, the *spirit* and *imagination* of man will be wandring oft-times, and we cannot be wholly *intent* in the *service* of *God*.

Now Sir, your complaint is not I perceive for want of the *gift* of prayer, expressions in supplications, but for the decay of the *fervor* and *zeal* you formerly had: but whether you charge yourself with that *infirmity* of our *mortal state* and condition only, that you are not *wholly intent* and *attent* at your *prayers*; or whether you complain as guilty of some *notorious wandrings* of thoughts at your performance of *holy duties*, which are truly *personal faults*, I understand not, and therefore I answer somewhat to both.

EXACT and *full intention*, with all our soul, in the worship of God, we must aim at, and strive for, and lament our defects in it; our vain imaginations, our worldly thoughts, and whatever divert us from the *attention* to that holy business, we have in hand, though we consent not to them, nor stay upon them with any delight, but reject them as fast as they arise in our minds; yet these, and every one of these, we must lament and bewail, and be displeased with ourselves for those our failings; lament these, I pray, as the *natural infirmities* of your condition in the

flesh, though (as I conceive with submission t better judgments) *not as your personal faults* an sins; these argue not any decay of the *grace* an fervor, only an *imperfection* in it, as there is all *graces* in the best saints of God on earth.

But then, secondly, if your complaint be some *notorious wandrings*, some *stay* upon va imaginations, and some *delight* in them, whic take your soul off from its *intention* in *praye* these are sins and *personal faults* in you.

And even these sins are too common wit many of the children of God, and therefore it not improbable you may complain of them.

And this *indevotion* and want of recollectin our thoughts home while we are at holy dutie is sometime a *cause* of our *drought* and *barrenness* we use not well that *talent* of *fervor* and *ze* which God gives us, we stir it not up, and ther upon we grow *barren* and *dry*: and another whi this is the *effect of our barrenness*, we want o former *comforts* and *delights* in *holy duties*, an thereupon we cannot be so *intent* at them as fo merly. These our *comforts* are (as you allud like *Aaron* and *Hur* to *Moses*, very useful to hol up our *weary hands in prayer*: *fervor* and *inte tion* do ordinarily decrease for want of *comfor* and *delight* to support and strengthen it.

Now if this decay of *zeal* and *fervor* be in yo *as the cause* of your *barrenness*, I need not sa *how severe* you should be in *judging* yourself bring

bringing all these inconveniences upon your own soul, by your own sins; and if as *the effect of this your barrenness*, yet repent you must of your *neglect* of *this grace* of God, that you should stir up this your *fervor* no longer than it was for your own turn (your *comfort* and *delight*) when that could not be served by it, that you *neglected* it, and suffered it to decay in you. And then after this you must endeavour to *strengthen your feeble knees, and hold up your heavy hands*, that your soul may recover daily, and encrease again to its wonted *fervor*, and then go on beyond your former measure, adding *fervor* unto *fervor*, and *strength* unto *strength*. It is, for *God*'s cause, and for the *love* of him you are *fervent* in this your *barrenness*, and therefore let it far exceed that *fervor* you were wont to have for your own sake, because of your own *comforts* with it.

But now, as I must not sooth you up in the least degree of sin, or want of due *fervor*, and therefore I have said this; so on the other side, I must not suffer you to be dejected and cast down without a just cause, and therefore I shall say more, and tell you, *I hope better things of you.*

The *quick sense* you have of your *want* of *fervor*, and the *present grief* which you express redounding from it, is a probable argument to me, that your *fervor* is as much at present as formerly it was, though it be not so *sensible* to you; and neither that *grace* of *fervor*, nor any other

in you can be so *evidently perceived* by you, w you labour under that *total privation of con* (whereof you complain) as at other times may.

And if so, that which you complain no is only this, that the wonted *comfort* of you *vor* and *zeal* (which formerly you had in C service) is now withdrawn from you, so tha can neither feel your *comfort*, nor your *fer* not that your *fervor* is abated, but that the *forts* in which it did reflect to your eye are t away for you; it is not now to be discerne them. And then it will appear it is God's : you want in *comforting*; not his *grace in a* *you* in *his worship*; and so it is the same d you complained of before, though now it c towards the height and violence of it: *co I pray what I say, and the Lord give you u standing* to discern aright what your want and how they may be supplied: to that pu I shall pray for you, as becometh.

Your servant in (

LETTER VIII.

The soul farther complaineth of a total privation of grace, somewhat too evident in her, because she wants all spiritual joy.

SIR,

THE want of those *dainties*, as you term them, cannot but trouble me, that once I should have *fullness of joy*, but now unworthy of it, be thrust down, as I deserve, to a *lower mess*; but now and then I fear that even the *daily bread*, you speak of, is denied unto me, yea, *the crumbs which fall from my Lord's table*, so little *joy* and *delight* I find in *holy duties*: and further, if sometimes I have instead of *bread* a *stone*, hard and dry, without any softness and moisture, surely then I want not only those *dainties* and *delicacies* for my pleasure and comfort, but even this *bread* for my nourishment: and this hard fare hath made me so moderate in my desires, that though I have not such an allowance of *joy* as is expedient to commend my love, yet if I could constantly perceive that portion of *joy* in me, which is *necessary* to evidence that a love there is in me, I should rest satisfied with it, and possess my soul in peace and quietness: for what greater comfort need I desire *than this*, that my *joy* and love is such as is a *ceptable in* God's sight; and that notwithst

ing my manifold imperfections, I am in the favour of God through Christ? If I be of God's *family*, though but a *door-keeper*; if I be at his table, though of the *lowest mess*, this would be a great comfort, and a full satisfaction to me.

But, alas! Sir, instead of my former *omer of joy*, I do not now find this *ephah!* And if my *joy* wholly fails, what love can there be in me? And now of late I have been searching up and down my soul for those other *graces* and *virtues* which *God's Spirit had formed in me*; and whereas they should grow and increase more and more, for a while they also have languished in me, and now I fear they are quite dead: my comforts were no sooner taken away from me, but these *graces* I perceived maimed and sorely lamed in me, when I was once *stripp'd* quite of them, I presently felt myself wounded in these *vitals of grace* and *virtue*, but now I am quite stripp'd, I fear, of these two, *spoliatus consolatione, & spoliatus gratiâ* also.

My sins, my sins, have excluded the *comforts* of God, and the *graces* of God also, from my soul; I am less than the least of them all: I call to mind the days that are past, when my soul enjoyed a sweet *communion* with God, when there were continual intercourses full of unspeakable *comfort* between *my Lord* and *my soul*; when he *was pleased* frequently to lead me into his banqueting-house, and there cheer me with flagon

and apples; when my soul was elevated and staid up with his consolations and graces; and when I recall this, my soul sinks into the valley of sorrow: For now my God passes by me as a wayfaring man, and is become a stranger unto me, visits me not, either with comforts or grace.

And when I hear my God aggravating Solomon's sin, *because he had shewed himself unto him twice*, 1 Kings, xi. 9. I tremble and fear lest that should be a charge against me also, that, after God had appeared unto me, with most kind visits of comforts, and with a most sweet fellowship of graces so long together day by day, I should provoke him by my transgressions to with-hold these good things from me.

But Lord, though my soul faint for these thy mercies, yet will I hope in thy word; though mine eyes fail with looking after thee, saying, When wilt thou comfort me? though I am become like a bottle in the smoak, (parched and dry, filthy and unfit for any service in thy Tabernacle) *yet will I not forget thy power nor thy mercy*, Psal. cxix. 82. Thou who gavest these first, canst and will restore them to me again; if I be beyond cure and cannot be healed, because I am dead, and my vitals of grace perished, yet I may be revived: *Enliven and quicken me, O Lord, I beseech thee, after thy loving kindness, and so shall I keep thy testimonies*: Join with me, I pray, Sir in these my prayers, for I am

Your friend and servant in Ch

The ANSWER.

Graces may be in the soul, and not perceived by the soul; some have spiritual joy and feel it not because they will not; others cannot.

SIR,

I Am heartily sorry that your fears and jealousies concerning the main of all, your *regeneration* and *acceptation into the favour of God*, increase rather than decrease in you; I cannot answer positively to any of these fears which arise in you; God only, who knows your heart is able fully and undoubtedly to certify you, whether you be one of his servants and family or no; and whether your soul be wounded or quite stripp'd of his graces.

YET this I can answer in general, First, That though the spirit of man can discern its own dispositions and qualifications what it hath, and what it hath not; yet whether they be *natural inclinations* or *spiritual graces*, it cannot *naturally* discern; the holy spirit of God must witness with our spirit, *concerning the things which are given us of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 12. so that to know the *graces of God* which are in us, is from God.

SECONDLY, from God as a gift, not as a grace: and *therefore* I believe some servants of God have

have many graces in them, when they have not this gift of God to know they have them: the Apostle indeed says, *He who lacketh these graces is blind*, 2 Pet i. 9. But he says not, he who is blind and cannot see them lacketh them; our *faith* and all our other graces may lie buried and overwhelmed with the distrustful suggestions of the flesh, so that we cannot see them: these graces may have private operations in us, secret to us, yet manifest to God; the spirit within us may groan, and God hear it, when we do not.

And THIRDLY, I hope it is thus with you at this Time, that your former graces and virtues are in you, though you want this gift to discern them: do you not give way too much to these *fears* and *jealousies* of your flesh, so that God suffers your graces to be overwhelmed with them.

AND now in particular, concerning your *joy* and *love* of God; I answer, that this *ephah of joy*, as you term it, which is the constant fruit of love, though it be little in respect of the *omer*, yet in itself it is great and very considerable; who can meditate upon his own interest which he hath with God, that he is his God and his Saviour, and not have great joy in himself? though there be no *sensible consolations* at all to accompany this joy, yet there are many dear servants of God, who live by it, and are all their lives long supported *with this joy alone*, and a very good evidenc they account it of their love of God, and th faith in him.

And ſome there are who have this *joy* in them, but *feel it not*; and thereupon they complain for want of its *evidence* to their *love* and *faith*; and theſe are of two ſorts, ſuch as *will* not *feel* it, and ſuch as cannot *feel* it. Some there are who are ſo carried away with *melancholy*, or with *temptations* from their *ghoſtly enemies*, that they make it a main part of their buſineſs to raiſe *doubts* and *fears* in themſelves; ſpend their time and wit in framing *objections*, and in ſtarting *jealouſies* againſt themſelves, and thus *help forward their own affliction*, and in the mean time whatever arguments of *comfort* they hear, or read, or *feel* in themſelves, *theſe* they let *paſs unregarded*; they are very *quick* at *objections*, yet very *ſlow* and dull at the *ſolutions* of them; whereas a far leſs degree of reaſon and wiſdom would anſwer all their *objections*, and reſolve all their *doubts*, if they would bend their ſtudy or their thoughts that way. Theſe I reckon among them who have the *joy* of the *ſpirit* in *them*, but *feel* it not, becauſe they *will not*. They look only upon the *dark ſide of the cloud* (which is for the Ægytians) whereas the *light ſide it is*, which is to be a *guide* to the *Iſraelites*; they are all for *fears* and *doubts*, not at all for *comforts* to themſelves. And though I will not, yet I pray aſk yourſelf the queſtion *whether you be* not of this *form*.

If not, yet others there are who have this *joy of the ſpirit*, and *cannot feel it*; it is in them.

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and so are other *graces* too, though they *cannot discern it* nor *them*. They have this *Ephah of heavenly Manna*, yet because they think of the *Omer*, which others happily have, and they themselves have formerly had, they want it, while they have it; it is their *bread* and the staff of their *spiritual life*; yet because it is more *dry* and *less savoury* then heretofore it was, they account they receive *no nourishment* from *it*: and there are many of this *form in Christ's school*; and though *fears* and *doubts* be high in you, yet I hope you are not excluded; your *graces* are still in you, and as *vigorous* as ever; no *desertion* at all of *grace* in you. For it is ordinary that the other *desertion* of *comfort*, when it is towards its height, raises all these *fears* and *doubts* in us, and our *ghostly enemies* take us at this *disadvantage*, and labour what they can to *foment our fears* in us.

THE school-men are wont to say, that all the while our *most blessed Saviour Christ* lived upon earth, there was (as it were) *a traverse drawn* between the *beatifical vision*, and the *sensitive faculties of Christ's human soul*: and that when our *Saviour* was upon the *cross and cried out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? then the traverse was drawn between the beatifical vision, and the reasonable faculties of his human soul.*

THIS may be applied to many good christian: nd to you also I hope. While you abounded wi heav

heavenly *comforts*, (as you first mentioned) you were (as it were) with *Christ* in *heaven, full every where*, and *replenished all over* with *joy* and *comfort*. Afterward in your *first dryness*, the beginning of your first *desertion*, you were (as it were) with *Christ on earth*; all the time of that *desertion of sensible comfort* there seemed to be a *traverse* drawn between that superabundant *joy*, and the *sensitive faculties* of your soul; and now in this *desertion of spiritual comfort*, in this depth of *barrenness*, you seem to be with *Christ* upon the *cross*; and the *traverse* drawn between *those joys* and the *rational faculties* of your soul: Heretofore in your *desertion of sensible consolation*, the lower part of your soul (her *sensitive faculties*) cried out, *My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me!* but now even the upper part of your soul, your *rational faculties* also want the sight of those joys, and they cry out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken us!* now your *reasonable* soul *fears* it is also *forsaken*, though I verily hope it is only a *traverse* drawn between your *soul* and those *joys*; it began at first with a *cloud darkning*, now it is a *gross shadow eclipsing* the *comfortable light of the sun of righteousness*, and of those *graces* whichwere heretofore *shining* in you: And if so, as there was a *true hypostatical union* between *God* and *man in Christ*, while he *cried* out *so* on the *cross*, *though* the *manhood* had *no* vision of the *godhead*; *so* there is still a *mystical* union between

God

God and your *soul*, though you have *no vision* nor appearance of *it* : *substracta est visio, non soluta est unio* ; *love* still *unites you* to *God*, and there is *joy* and other *necessary graces* with it too, though you wanted the *comfort* of *them* in your *sensitive faculties for a long time*, and *now* also in your *reasonable*.

But, an argument you have against all my hopes, and that is, that none of these graces do *increase* and *grow* in you, and therefore they must *wither* and *decay*.

Consider, I pray, there are other graces to grow in you, beside *peace* and *joy* ; and though the light of God's countenance, those sun-shine days might ripen them most, yet this present cloudy weather may advantage your growth in *humility*, and *mourning* and *self-denial* ; and if there be a growth downward in these, though you perceive no growth upward in the other, yet you are increasing in *holiness*.

And I must not conceal it from you, in this case you are now, that from hence are my hopes concerning you much cherished ; I perceive you feel your want of grace, and you complain and mourn for it, (which the dead cannot do) and you confess your sins with great humility, loathing *yourself* for them, and you trust in God *firmly*, *that* he can and will restore you, (an *these* proceed not but from life and vigour to

to your wonted comforts and graces, and upon these grounds I will still hope well of you.

NEITHER can I peremptorily assert, that God withholds this *joy* and *comfort* from you, as a Judge punishing you hereby for some sin or neglect; for sometimes he is pleased to withhold them as a *Lord of the family*; he usually orders it thus for our benefit, for our trial, for the exercise of our patience and waiting upon him, or for the growth of our humility, or for some other spiritual advantage to us; and otherwhile also God orders it so, for his own will's sake, because he is Lord, and we his people; not judicially but œconomically, not for punishment nor benefit directly to us, but for some *design* he hath upon us; as he dealt with the blind man in the Gospel, who was born blind, not for the punishment of any sin, nor for the exercise of any virtue primarily, but for the *glory of God.*

NOW, Sir, my prayer for you is, that as the Apostles, so you also with your *fear* may have *great joy*, Matt. xxviii. 8, and then as the *Macedonians*, in the *abundance of afflictions* you may have *abundance of joy*, 2 Cor. viii. 8.

Sir, I am

Your servant in Christ.

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LETTER IX.

The soul is now perplexed with the affrightments of conscience, and with the terrors of God's most heavy displeasure.

SIR,

MY disease increaseth yet more and more, and howe'er I escaped hitherto, yet now it threatneth *utter ruin.* I have long wanted the light of God's countenance, but now I espy him frowning against me; the frowns of a *Father*, such a *Father*, (who hath been so merciful unto me, and so tender of me, formerly) who can bear? That from a *friend* he should become a *stranger*, and pass me by instead of *visiting* me? this was *grievous* unto me; but now that he should come against me as an *enemy!* Job xix. 18. that he who spake *peace* formerly unto my soul, should for a while be *silent!* was burthensome to me; but now that he should speak *bitter things against me!* this is a lamentation, and must ever be for a lamentation.

THE same hand which was wont to *lead* me in the regions of *light*, and distribute to me *abundance* of the *comforts* and *joys* of *heaven*, doth now *thrust* me down in the *pit* of *darkness* and *shadow* of *death*, where I see the *terrors* of *destruction*, and where I feel the *gnawings* of *hell*.

My *sins*, which were *removed* from me as far as the *East* is from the *West*, are now *met together again*, *and set in order* before me; and they which were as *white* as *snow* or *wooll*, are now *crimson* and *scarlet* again. Yea, my *Saviour* and *Redeemer* who was my *surety* and *cancelled* the *bond* of *hand-writing* which was *against* me, is now become an *incensed creditor against me*. *Lord*, if I could *believe* in *him*, *he* would *quit* me and set me *free again*, *Oh*, *help thou mine unbelief!* and though I am *weak* in *faith*, make me *faithful* in *weakness*,

And yet my *hope perisheth* also, *Lam.* iii. 18. I was wont, when I could not *rejoice* in things *enjoyed*, yet somewhat to *comfort* myself in *things promised*, but now *things past*, and *present*, and *to come*, are against me; and *fear* is on *every side*: *Lord* be thou *still my hope* and *my fortress!*

Sir, I delight not to expatiate in declaring this my most sad condition; I beseech you to pray for me, for I am a most distressed servant of *Christ*, and

Your's in him.

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The ANSWER,

Comforteth the soul in his most sad Condition, and then it is alledged, that all these Troubles may be from the Devil.

SIR,

THIS, if I be not deceived, is the *Paroxysm* and violent height of your former disease; and by your relation it appears that *Job* and *David*, and the *Church of God* in the Lamentations, whose words (you use) were in your very condition, and I need not tell you how dear they were unto God.

AND if it be God that is against you, I still hope that it is for the trial of you, or for the exercise of you, or for some of those other ends I have named before; and assure yourself if it be his hand that is heavy upon you, it may *bruise*, but it cannot *break* you.

AND yet I rather think, that the Lord *inflicts* not, only *suffers* this against you; that it is the *Devil* who thus *buffets* you; and that these are his fierce assaults and vehement temptations. And if so, as before you were conformable to our blessed Saviour in *desertion of comfort*, so now you fill up that conformity to him by enduring also *his infliction of temptations*: Was not he tempted to believe himself *not the Son* of God by generati

as you are to believe yourself *not his Son by adoption?* And were not terrors round about him, when he was in that agony, and when he cried out, *If it be possible let this cup pass from me*, as terrors now compass you about.

And if our Head, and our fellow-members have suffered these *very afflictions*, I pray think it not strange concerning this *fiery trial:* especially considering that this conformity to Christ's sufferings will work out for you *a conformity to him in glory.*

This in general: in particular concerning the horrid representation of your sins before you, as *unpardoned:* provide, I presume, you do, that your repentance is *sincere* and *unfeigned*, and therefore the pardon of your sins is *irreversible.* The sprinkling of the *blood of Christ*, hath fully discharged every penitent soul from the *guilt of sin*; and this gift of the *pardon of our sins* is *a gift of God without repentance.*

But this full discharge is not fully apprehended by us, our consciences cannot so perfectly apprehend the pardon of our sins, as Christ perform it; as the other faculties of our souls, so our consciences are sanctified *in part* only, not *wholly*; and therefore it is, that when God's spirit *ceaseth* to witness with our consciences, (as in this height of *spiritual desertion* it doth) then we fall presently into *fears* and *doubts*, and *self-condemnings:* you *want only* therefore the *attestation of the spirit of*

God

God with your conſcience, to embolden and encourage you *firmly* to believe the *forgiveneſs of your ſins*, and if that once come, your deſertion is gone, and your diſeaſe cured.

Now, Sir, if your ſins, through Chriſt, be *fully pardoned*, though this pardon be not *fully apprehended* by you, which our *imperfect mortal ſtate* will *ſcarce* admit;) nay, though it be *not at all* apprehended by you, (which is the ordinary condition of the ſervants of God when they are in deſertion) though you *walk in this darkneſs and have no light, yet put your truſt in the Name of the Lord, and ſtay upon your God.* Iſa. l. 10.

But even in this, your faith, you ſay, fails you; now, therefore, *call to remembrance the days of old*; thoſe many mercies and favours which God hath beſtowed upon you; and by the experiences of his forepaſt goodneſs towards you, ſtrengthen your faith in his preſent and future mercies towards you; God's mercies *paſt*, are warrants for *future* mercies, and where they have been great *heretofore*, they are obligations, whereby God binds himſelf to us, to beſtow greater *hereafter*. You, therefore, who have received *much* heretofore, to you *much more* ſhall be given hereafter: *Habenti dabitur.* Oh! let this ſtrengthen your faith and your hope too! but that is alſo out of your ſight, and ſeems to be periſhed too; and yet our Apoſtle ſaith expreſly, *Hope that is ſeen, is not hope.* Rom. viii. 24.

And, therefore, though *terrors be round abou you*, truſt, I pray, in him, who knows, by hi own experience, what it is to be deſerted of *al Comfort*, and to be *tempted*, and moſt violentl aſſaulted by the *Devil*; truſt in him, *who knou whereof you are made*, and when you are able t bear no more; truſt in him, who, if not before yet then will certainly *help* you and *deliver* you And in the midſt of your fears and terrors, *look u unto him* who hath promiſed *to look down upo you*, *who are poor*, *and of a contrite Spirit*, *an who tremble at his Word*. Iſa. lxvi. 2. Hid yourſelf under *his own wings*, *for a little moment and the Indignation will be overpaſt*: In the mea while I ſhall pray with that Devout Fathe *Oh modicum longum*, *pie Domine*, *longum eſt*, & *multum valde nimis!* Thou haſt promiſed, Lor to afflict but for a moment; alas! holy Lord, i hath been a long, very long moment, and too to long: It is enough, Lord, it is enough, let thi Cup paſs. This is the earneſt prayer of hin who is;

Your Servant in Chriſt.

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LETTER X.

The soul refreshed again, with the return of her former consolations.

SIR,

I RETURN you many thanks for your letters of ghostly *direction* and *comfort*; and for your prayers for me; and the more heartily, because they prove so behoofful and advantageous to me; the *floods* of *afflictions*, and the *waves* of *terrors*, *beat vehemently upon my soul*, but the *Lord*, *who sitteth above the water floods* hath supported me; and I have now seen *the wonders of God in the deep:* The *wonder* of *his wisdom* in the variety of his dispensations of *comfort* and *joy*; and then of *grief* and *terror*; to several men, severally: And the great *wonder* of his *power* and *goodness*, in upholding my *faint soul*, against the *violence* of all these *afflictions*; and now also in *freeing* and *deliveriug me from them all.*

I tarried the Lord's leasure, and he hath now again *given me my hearts desire*; *he hath brought my feet out of that horrible pit*, *out of the mire and clay*, *and set me upon an hill* and *a rock*, and *there doth he order my* goings.

I HAVE *found* him whom I sought, the love of *my soul*, and the *joy* of mine heart, my God, *my Lord.*

Now I *enjoy* his *presence*, I *feel* his *influ* and the *light* of his *countenance* also *shines* me; *O Lord I will praise thee, for though wast angry with me, thine anger is soon turn way, and thou now comfortest me.* Surely, my *sufferings*, *compared* with the *age* of my *ness*, but especially with the *eternity* of *com* which I shall enjoy, were but for a *moment*, *a short*, *short moment*, but the *twinkling of a* and now my *joys* return: I now behold the *of God*, and *feel his comforts* in the *servic worship of him*; and therefore every *hour* *five*, till the *hour* of *prayer* comes; till by *templations* and *meditations* I bring my *God* t *soul*: The *days* for the solemn *worship* and *vice* of *God*, I could wish every one of th *Joshua's day*; the longest is too short for and my wonted *hours of devotion* and *medit* are too narrow a confinement for them; and I am fitted with the *comforts* of *God*, my *dilates* itself further, by looking upon the *j* *heaven*; for if there be such *joy* during the *time*, how infinite is the *joy of harvest?*

Praised be the Lord who hath heard my com *and answered my prayers*, and that with advan I asked my former *comforts*, and he fills me them far more than before; he hath been bountiful to me, than I dared presume to Now I preceive it was so far from being *preju* *to me, that it was most expedient* for me,

Christ should go away from me, with these his consolations; for now he hath *sent the Holy Ghost the comforter* down into my soul, with far greater *delights*, and with more heavenly *joy* then ever heretofore; and if *barrenness* be so *fruitful*, and yeild such a plentiful *harvest*, oh my soul be thou never hereafter (though thy *barrenness* should return again) dejected, or troubled at it: Resolve thou rather with *Habukkuk*; *cap.* iii. 17. Though there *be no oil of joy*, nor *wine of comfort*, no, *nor blossom on the olive tree or vine*, (no appearance, or hopes of any *oil* or *wine* for *refreshment*) yet will I *love* the *Lord*, and *rejoice* in my *God*; and then press forward, (O my *soul*) towards that of *Job*, xiii. 15. *Etiamsi occideres*, though I be parched and withered with *drought*, and consumed with *barrenness*, though thou killest me (O Lord) with it, yet will I *love thee*, and *trust* in thee.

O *Sir*, rejoice with me, and bless *God* for me, the *God* of my *joy*, and my *comfort* for ever; *To him be all glory, and honour, and thanks*, for this his infinite mercy to me.

I PRAY *Sir*, let not this my health and tranquility of mind deprive me of your letters; I am now at good leasure to receive what further *directions* you shall think fit for me, and thereby you shall still engage.

Your servant in Christ.

The Answer.

Sensible consolations, which proceed sometime from the holy spirit, may proceed also from our own temper, or from the evil spirit; and therefore here is a limitation annexed to the former directions.

Sir,

I DO truly sympathize with you, and rejoice for the *return* and *encrease* of your *joys*; now you *see* how *good* and *gracious* the *Lord* is, to all that call upon *him*, and *wait* upon him patiently, according to his *promise* by the *Prophet*, Isa. liv. 7. *With great mercies will I visit thee again, though for a small moment I have forsaken thee.*

Your afflictions were like *Job's*, in *body*, in *estate*, in your *friends*, and in the *barrenness* of your *spirit*, and in the *terrors* of your *soul*; and your *deliverance* is like *his* also (in these spiritual things:) you have already received *double* for all your *losses*; for a *cup* of *affliction*, *vessels* of *joy*; for *disconsolate days*, *months* of great *delight* and *comfort*.

Continue I pray, your *indifferency*, to *abundance* or *want*; let not the height of your *joys puff you* up, nor the depth of desertion cast *you down*; or any condition dishearten you in th

the *service of God*: Learn to be as well content, to be with *Christ* on *Mount Calvary*, sorely suffering, as on *Mount Tabor*, *full of joy and comfort*; and as heretofore *Christ* was your only *hope* in your *barrenness* and *sorrow*, so let him be your *rock* and your *castle* still; and *rejoice* not so much in your *consolations*, as in *him*, who is the only true *joy* and *comfort* for ever.

And now *Sir*, seeing you invite the trouble of my letters still to you, I cannot more fitly begin, than with a *limitation* to my former *directions*.

They were prescribed to you, presuming (not without goods grounds) that you are in the state of *regeneration*, and fitted they were only for you, and for such as you are, the *true servants* of *God*, and therefore no way serviceable to any others: And that this my *limitation* of them, may appear to be necessary, I shall inform you, that these *consolations* (whereof I have hitherto written) are *sometimes* a special *gift* of *God*, which he bestows upon some men to *invite* them, and *allure* them by the sweetness of them to his service, and one whose heart is still *stony may receive the word with joy*. Matt. xiii. 20. And at other times God bestows these consolations *after* regeneration to strengthen them, regenerate and encourage them in his service; and because they want it most in their *weak beginnings*, he then therefore more ordinarily and more plentifully *bestows them*.

SECONDLY, these consolations sometime proceed from our own temper, and from our natural constitution: some men, and many women, have such soft constitutions and tender tempers, that the affections of *joy* and *grief* are very soon raised in them, they may soon be dissolved, as it were into *sighs* and *tears*; and they are soon dilated and enlarged with the chearful expressions of *love* and *joy*: whereas men of other tempers cannot so readily express their grief or joy.

AND altho', as of all other tempers, so of this softer constitution, some have these consolations given them from God, as above expressed, yet it is most evident that thousands of men and women abound in *outward and sensible consolations*, not as a *special gift of God*, but as *naturally*, proceeding from their own constitution.

AND as the natural man may have them, so may the carnal man also; for Thirdly, these *consolations* are sometime raised by the Devil; and although the Devil may raise these consolations sometimes in the true servants of God; yet it is most likely and ordinary that he should raise them in the *wicked* and *profane*, over whom the Prince of Darkness hath most power.

AND these *consolations*, though they spring from several fountains; from heaven, the holy *spirit*; from earth, our own tempers; from Hell, *the evil spirit*; yet are they all full of the same *comforts* and delights to the outward sensitive facul-

faculties of the soul; but with this difference, the first are holy and good; the second neither good nor bad in themselves, though easily improveable to good, but indifferent; and the third, as their author is, evil and dangerous.

And hence it follows, that these consolations are common to *four* sorts of men; those from *heaven*, to some who are called and chosen; and to others also, who are *only* called, not chosen; those from our natural constitution, to meer natural men; and those from Hell, to carnal and sensual men; and that *one* sort only of these *four* are the *true* servants of God. And therefore as there may be *true* repentance and love of God, and joy in that true servant of God without these, as I said before; so now I say these consolations may be, and are in *three* sorts of men without *true* repentance, and without true love and joy.

And now, having limited my former counsel and directions to the best sort only of men, I shall take my leave; and praying constantly for you, as you do I hope for me, commend you to the *establishing* and *perfecting* grace of God, and rest

Your Servant in our

Lord and Master Christ.

LETTER XI.

The soul aboundeth more and more with consolations; and is now at leisure to enquire farther into the causes of sensible consolations.

SIR,

I STILL abound with these *consolations*, and I cannot mistrust them to come from any other *fountain* than from *heaven*; my *sentive faculties* have some share in *outward consolations*, but my *rational faculties* overflow with *them*; and therefore I bless *God* the *author* of *these* and of all true *comforts*: and these still *encrease* in me; the *oil* of my former *joy* was as that in the *widows* little cruise; but now I have such store, that (with the other *widow*) I want *vessels to hold it*.

Oft-times I cry out (with the *holy man* I read of) *sufficit Domine, sufficit; it is enough Lord, it is enough, I am full of joy*, brim-full, and can hold no more. And sometime I say with that holy *Ephraim* (whom I read of) *Recede paulisper Domine, quoniam vas hoc gragile est; Come not so near, O Lord, with these heavenly ravishments, because I want a vessel fit for them; this of my flesh is small and weak, and if thou steppest not back awhile, it will even now* break asunder: I would not conceal this *loving* kindness of the Lord

but your last letter is it I must speak unto; and I hope it will not be accounted *curiosity* if I desire to be instructed farther concerning those *sensible consolations.*

I KNOW by late experience, that a *true servant of God* may be without *these consolations*, but that any should have them who is not the *servant of God*, seems strange unto me; that the *rational faculties* may have true *joy* in them, when there is none in the *sensitive faculties*, this I have felt; they have been in the *inward*, and not in the *outward man*; but that the outward man should have them, and not the inward; the *flesh* (which is *more backward* of the *two to any thing that good is*) and not the *soul* and *heart* (as it must be if carnal men have them) this is not clear to me.

ANY again, that men of *soft natural temper* should have these *sensible consolations oftner* and in *greater measure* then men of contrary *tempers*, this seems evident enough; (as soft wax receives a deeper impression than hard, because it is more fitly disposed for it) but, that these consolations (which are concerning God, and in the performance of holy duties) should proceed from the *natural* temper of any man, this is not so evident.

AND thirdly, that the Devil, who labours all he can to quash these consolations, and deprive us of them, that he should bestow them upon any *man*, but especially that he should at any time *befriend* the servants of God with them;

seems very strange to me. I presume (you see) upon your wonted favour, and if your occasions permit you to write concerning these particulars, it will be a further obligation upon me, who am

Your friend and servant
in Christ our Lord.

The Answer.

That sensible consolations are one of the Devil's spiritual temptations, whereby he deceiveth many Papists and Protestants.

Sir,

I Am most ready to satisfy you in your three particulars: It is most true that *Corpus aggravat animam*, as the Wiseman speaks, the flesh pulls the soul back from any thing that is good; and though both of them, in our corrupt state, are backward to every good thing, (as to grieve for sin, and to rejoice in holy duties to God) yet the flesh and the body is the more backward of the two; and how that should partake of these consolations, and the soul be without them; that the sensitive faculties should at any time have them, and not the reasonable, in this you desire further satisfaction.

That of the Apostle may be applied to this *very particular; The spirit is edified, and the under*

derstanding remains unfruitful. 1 Cor. xiv. the spirit, that is, the sensitive faculties of the spiritual soul, may be edified, though the understanding, the rational faculty, be not, S. *Aug.* The tone, or the elocution, or the action and gesture of him who speaketh in an unknown tongue may work upon them, not upon this.

And you may consider further, that ordinarily God works upon the soul by the help of the body; by the eye, or the ear, and so upon the imagination, and by that upon the rational faculties; and thus the soul is stirred up to apprehend this or that, and to hate or love this or that, and then to grief or joy for this or that; and therefore there may be some motions to hatred and love, and to joy and grief, and some beginnings of them also, in the outward parts and faculties which ascend not so high as the rational faculties; or ascend not with that power, as to make an impression in the will and understanding: and so the body, which is the more backward of the two in affection to good) is before the soul in order of time, God working by the body upon the soul.

And that this remote motion (which begins in the outward sensitive faculties) to sorrow for sin, and to joy in Gods service is from, and by the grace of God, stirring them up thereunto, *may be an answer* to your second particular.

That our constitutions are tender and so

and that we are by them easy to be wrought upon for the expressions of joy and grief; this is a gift of God not common to all: but that such a melting temper is actually moved and wrought upon, to vent those expressions of grief for sin, and those of joy in the service of God, and not on the contrary (as naturally all tempers do) this is the special grace of God, this is a motion of the blessed spirit, stirring up the sensitive faculties to invite the rational faculties to mourn for sin, and to the love of virtue.

And now it will not seem strange to you (seeing outward things do most commonly stir up these sensible consolations) that the body should be sometime affected with them, and not the soul; the sensitive and not the rational faculties: For, first, these outward things are nearer to the sensitive faculties than to the rational: and secondly, they have a greater assimilation or likeness to the sensitive than to the rational faculties; and it is no marvel that things which are like one to the other, and at a little distance one from the other, should have an influence one upon another, when they have no influence at all upon things unlike them at a greater distance from them; that, when outward and sensitive things work not upon the spiritual and rational faculties, which are far off them, they may, notwithstanding, work upon the sensitive faculties, *which are next* adjoining to them.

And

And now for your *third*, that these *sensible consolations*, are sometimes raised by the *Devil*: that this evil spirit can work upon the outward senses and upon the imagination, in that manner, as to move tears or joy in the *outward* man will not be denied, and therefore that he will move us in that manner, if he can *wrest* those *consolations* to his advantage, this will be granted also.

All that is questioned then, is, Whether the *Devil* can gain any *advantage* to himself by our *sensible consolations*.

Indeed his common project is to deprive us of them, that he may tempt us, for the want of these *comforts*, to desert the service of God, as a *sour grape*, and as *unsavoury waters*; and at other times for his own ends he is as ready to give them to us. When the Devil cannot prevail against us by *worldly temptations*, then he casts *spiritual temptations* in our way; and for one of those, he useth these *sensible consolations*.

And this is most notorious in the *Popish* Churches abroad: The Popish Priests make it a chief Part of their Business, both at their *Prayers* and *Sermons*, to raise up in their people these *outward consolations*; which is not that I blame in them, but the many *mimical* and *bystrionical gestures* and *postures*, which they use for this purpose; which are so absurd and childish, that they are as likely to move *scorn* in the rational faculties, (when they are examined by reason and Scripture) as *consolations* in the sensitive faculties

And yet as *foolish* and *vain* as their gestures are, they produce this effect of *sensible consolations* most plentifully in many of the people; the Devil, I persuade myself, it is, who furthers these *Papists* with such *sensible consolations* in a most plentiful manner, that by the *outward gust* and *sweetness* of them, he may still hold them in love with their *errors* and *superstitions*.

When I see many of them more affected and delighted at their *devotions before a Crucifix*, or *an Image of some Saint or Angel*, than before the *most dreadful and merciful Lord of all*, *without these Images*; when I observe that they have greater plenty of these *sensible consolations* at an *Ave Maria* than at a *Pater-noster*, and more at a *Pater-noster* (which language many of them understand not) than at *Our Father*, &c. in their mother tongue; that they more abound with them at their Prayers to *Saints* and *Angels*, than at their Prayers to *God* himself; when I hear some of them say, While we were with you in the *Protestant Church*, though we employed ourselves in *holy* and *religious duties*, with diligence and earnestness, yet we wanted those *comforts* and *delights* in them which we now find: there are no *joys* like those *joys* we now taste, since we were reconciled to the *Church of Rome*, and since we gave up ourselves to observe the *rites* and *ceremonies*, and *orders* of that Church; when I *see and hear* these things, may I then not fully

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conclude, that these *consolations* are not from *above* but from *beneath*; not from *God*, but from the *evil spirit*, the *deceiver?*

And I wish heartily there were no such delusions in our *Protestant Churches*, and that these delusions of the Papists had no influence upon some of us of the *Reformation*.

These *consolations* which many Papists find in their devotions, are motives which prevail with some of them, I doubt, to be so frequent at their *prayers*; *seven times a day* ordinary with many of them; so that we cannot deny, tho' we blush to say it, that many of the *Popish* persuasion, are more frequent at their *devotions* than we of our persuasion ordinarily are; whereas were their devotions *less affectuous*, and not so fraught with this *outward* and *sensible sweetness*, it may be feared that they would stay at a lower number: And yet this *frequency* at their devotions, and their *affectuousness* in them, are arguments which have prevailed with some weak, though well-affected people, to forsake us, and to become their *Proselytes*. And therefore, if these *consolations* plentifully scattered, have been, and are still, the occasion at least of confirming *Papists* in their *errors*, and of seducing *Protestants* from the *truth*, who will not grant that the *Devil* is the Grand Agent in them?

And now for our *Protestant* Churches; I have known divers men, but especially women, very much

affected at Sermons and Prayers, and so much the more if the Curate disfigures himself thereat by *uncomely looks*, or useth *mimical gestures*; if he draw out his Prayers with a *whining tone*, and his Sermons with a *thundering voice*: whereas a *grave Divine*, with a *sober* carriage and *meet* elocution, moves them not at all.

When I perceive more *weeping eyes*, and more *chearful countenances* at the singing of the Psalms, translated into metre, than at the same Psalms (sung too) in other translations, in Prose: And when I hear some say that they are more *edified*, that is, *affected with sensible consolations*, at *extemporary prayers*, (especially when they are toned out) than at *composed prayers* and *set forms*, reverently pronounced; that at those, their groans and sighs, beat as thick as a pulse in the height of a fever, and at the *divine Liturgy of the Church*, and other godly forms of prayer, their souls are quite barren, and their hearts as hard and dry as flints; though in some of these I think those *consolations* may proceed from their own *natural temper*, or from *custom*, or *pre-engaged affections*, or so; yet I doubt the *Tempter*, that *Deceiver*, hath somewhat to do in most of them.

It is he, I fear, who is active to lull their affections *asleep* at our divine service, lest it should be *truly profitable* and *advantageous* to them; and as busy, I fear, he is, in *stirring* them up, and *awakening* them at these indigested extempo-

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rary prayers, and stirs up *false joys* and *griefs* with them.

And I am the rather induced to think that the *Devil* is an agent herein, because I perceive that after a while most of these *men* and *women* take up an ill conceit of our church *service*, and then, of all *set forms*; yea, even some of them mislike that set form of our *most blessed Savour's most absolute and most perfect prayer*. For, seeing their *outward comforts* are raised more at *extemporary prayers* and *Sermons* than at set forms and well-studied sermons, hereupon they esteem those only, and neglect, yea, contemn these; and now they begin to think that there is no *devotion* in themselves, or in others, unless they shew themselves to be as tedious in *babling*, and as vain as the *Pharisees* were.

And I am further confirmed in it, when I observe, in some of our good *brethren* and *sisters*, very evil *consequences* from such *consolations*.. For first, they *cry up such preachers* (whether divines or not) who raise these *consolations* in them for the only *soul saving preachers in the country*; and then to these *sermons* and *prayers* they must travel (though their husbands and masters press them to the duties of their calling at home) and all loss they account gain; the pains of travelling some miles, *pleasure*; if these *consolations* be raised or nourished in them; and then farther, all other *divines* they *contemn*, and *strive with their priests*, ac-

counting them all un-edifying and unprofitable to themselves and others, *without heat*, and *without light*.

And while they have the persons of their own *ministers* in *admiration*, esteeming them such infallible guides, that they can neither deceive, nor be deceived, nor mislead, nor be misled, mark I pray what follows (though I cannot write it without a great deal of grief) in this *honey* of *sensible consolations* there is wrapt up, too often, the *gall* of *error*, and *sedition*, and *schism*; and many thousands there are who swallow them altogether.

These their *admired preachers*, at these *edifying sermons*, secretly instill into them dangerous opinions; and after a while these opinions bring on *wicked practices*: For, as they embrace error thinking it truth, and reject truth, thinking it error; so also they chuse evil, thinking it good, and refuse good thinking it evil; so that now, while they resist the *highest powers*, and while they persecute their fellow subjects, they are *perswaded* they do *God good service*.

And all these I sum up as *evil consequences* of that unhappy mistake of theirs, concerning these *sensible consolations*; that those consolations which they receive by the *ministry* of those *men*, and by the using of those means of *extemporary prayer* and the like, are the gift of God, and *evident signs* of their *edification* by them: whereas if they were the gift of *God*, and they truly *edified* by

by them, they would not only abound in some *virtuous practices* (such as they chuse as most suitable to their own dispositions) as of *prayer*, *zeal*, and *devotion*, and *attending* to the *ordinances of God's word* and *sacraments*, strictly keeping the Lord's day, and of liberality towards them of their own way; but in all other *virtues* also; in a ready performance of the *whole will of God*, in subduing the lusts of *pride* and *covetuousness*, and *anger*, and the like inordinate affections; in *charity* and *meekness*; in *humility* and *patience*; and in *obedience* also to their *natural*, *political*, and *ecclesiastical parents*; and until I see these principal *virtues* (as well as those others) practised by them, I cannot think (though I beg pardon if I judge amiss) that these their consolations are from *heaven*, *heavenly*.

And although they have now great *delight* and *joy*, in some exercise of *holiness*; yet their *errors* and *wicked practices* (if once discovered to them) will fill them full of *torment* and *vexation of spirit*; their *uncharitableness*, *fierceness* and *rage*, their *disobedience* and *disloyalty* to their *prince*, their *contempt* and *scorn* of the *clergy*, especially of the reverend *fathers* and *governors of the church*, their *sacrilege* in stripping the *church* of her *patrimony*, *ornaments*, and *liturgy*; their *schism*, their *oppression*, and *persecution*; the grief and sorrow for these, and such like sins of theirs (when God shall please to open their eyes) will

overthrow all this their *sensible joy* and *comfort*; then will they perceive that they were not *edified*, but *deluded*, and *seduced* by these *sensible consolations*.

And now Sir, if you please to consider what a plentiful *harvest*, here, and abroad, the *Devil* reaps from this seed of *sensible consolations*, you will not think strange that some of these (not to say most) come not from *God*, who sends *joy*, and *truth*, and *holiness* together: Nor that these *consolations* should be a snare of the *Devil's* laying; whereby many of (our dear christian brethren) the *papists* are kept still entangled in their sins and errors; and many also of our dear christian brethren, *protestants*, are drawn into *dangerous opinions*, and *wicked practices*.

The only thing then you are now unsatisfied in, is, that the *Devil* sometime raises such *consolations* in the *servants of God*: the *Devil* is too cunning and malicious to let any of his old snares (especially these *spiritual snares*, which are less discernible than others) lie by un-employed; he still casts them abroad, even among the *servants of God*.

When he observes some servants of God, to have such store of these *consolations* from *heaven*, that all his temptations to divert them from *God's service*, or to neglect these *comforts* of *God*, prevail as little against them (as new ropes did *against Sampson*) that the strength of their *consolations*

lations breaks them as a thread; and that they are still encouraged by them to go on in the *service and worship of God*, then he is ready to *add* to their *abundance*, and gives them a fuller measure of *consolations*, adding store of his, to theirs.

And after a while, when they have taken much *delight* and *pleasure* in the performance of *holy duties*, then he slightly goes about to perswade them, that they are more *holy* and more *devout* than they *were*, yea, than other men *are*; because they abound more with such *consolations* than they themselves *formerly did*, or than other *men now do*; and then he tempts them to think that *these christian duties of prayers* and the like, whereat they feel these *consolations*, are the only duties required at their hands; that their *devotion at prayers* and *sermons* is *holiness enough*, they may rest satisfied that they are accepted with God, (who sends them such abundance of comfort) and need not betake themselves to the practice of any other *holy duties*: Thus if the *Devil* can make these *consolations*, as he made the *Corban* to the *Pharisees* (a *plea to excuse them from other duties*) he will plentifully bestow them upon *those* he *most labours* to win to himself, *the true servants of God*.

It is reported of one of the *fathers* (saint *Hierom* I take it) that while he was at the holy *table of God* at *public prayers* for the *congregation*, he was on a sudden so *sensibly* affected, that the

fear

fears interrupted his *words*, and ſpeak he could not for *weeping*; and after that *pauſe* of *ſilence*, he checked the *tempter*, ſaying, *Etiam hic ſtas inimice nequam! Doeſt thou purſue me even to the horns of the Altar, oh thou wicked enemy? Is not this a place of refuge, is not this a ſanctuary to be ſecure in from thy temptations?*

THUS the devout *fathers* of old reckoned theſe *conſolations ſometimes*, among the *temptations* of the *Devil*.

OH that the Lord would diſcover to all *papiſts* and *proteſtants*, this ſlie and ſubtle ſnare of the *hunter*, and help us to *break it in ſunder!*

AND now I hope you are fully ſatisfied. I have writ the more largely of them, that I might hereby give you warning that all is not *gold* that *gliſters*; all who appear to us like *angels* of *light*, come not from *heaven*; and by what I have written, it will not be hard to diſcern the *true* from the *counterfeit*, the *conſolations of God* from *thoſe* of the *Devil*.

AND for a cloſe of all, though theſe *conſolations* of yours are (you hope) from the *holy ſpirit* (who giveth every good thing plenteouſly) yet there may be too much *delight* taken in them; and *temptations* there may come to reſt in them, to think yourſelf not only the *more happy*, but alſo the *more holy*, and the *more fervent* for them; yea, and *holy enough* with them: But labour I pray to *abound* (as with comfort) ſo in every

good

good work, knowing that the more *comfort* you receive, the more *holiness* you must return; these *consolations* are extraordinary *hires* to *virtue* and *holiness*; and the greater your *hire* is, the more *diligently* you should *labour* in the *vineyard of God*.

And last of all, as your *comforts* and *virtues increase*, so endeavour, that the chief of all *virtues*, *Humility* may abound and encrease in you daily: Have an especial care lest the *serpent bruise the heel*, the latter end of your life, by *exalting you above measure*, for the abundance of your *heavenly comforts*, and *holy virtues*; this is the hearty wish, and most fervent prayer of

Your friend and servant
in Christ Jesus *our Lord.*

LETTER XII.

The pious soul increasing in holy fear and godliness, is much troubled with doubts and scruples.

Sir,

It is now almost a year since I wrote to you last, and though I had no present need of your *directions*, you might reasonably expect some letters from me; but the truth is, I am again constrained to write, and your *readiness* to answer me formerly, and that so largely, makes me presume (without any

farther

farther apology) to desire your *directions* again. Not in that former case, I have fully *resigned* up myself to God, and am learning in *whatsoever state I am* (whether of *comforts* or of *sorrowfulness*) *therewith to be content*: but in another case, concerning doubts and scruples.

For, Sir, though in matters of faith (I bless God) I waver not, yet in matters of fact, both divine, and civil, spiritual, and temporal, many doubts, and scruples (I know not what to call them) arise in me daily. And though God hath given me a most sincere and unfeigned desire to please him, yet in many things I offend, in most things I *fear* and *doubt*.

One while I fear I indulge too much liberty to others, and too little to myself; another while, that I am too strict to others, and too remiss to myself; and therefore I mete not to others, as I mete to myself. I multiply quære's against myself; whether the duty was well performed, or not; this action lawful, or not: that word, or silence, seasonable, or not: And for commerce and traffick with my neighbours, whether this, and that bargain were just, not prejudicing myself, nor over-reaching him. And when I would give thanks for any thing well done, (through God's grace in me) I think it might have been better done, and that therefore my thanksgiving may be deferred.

Yesterday I considered and determined *affirmatively in this*, and negatively in that matter;

and

and to day somewhat is suggested against the one and the other: one day my conscience excuseth what I the other day judged amiss; and to day it accuseth for what I formerly judged aright: so that I scarce satisfy myself in one duty, or in one business of ten.

Now, Sir, if these motions be from the Spirit of God in me, I must hearken what the Lord God saith to my soul; at my utmost peril it is, if I receive not, and cherish those motions; and if they be doubts I raise of myself, they are not to be neglected, there is danger, my books tell me, in that; but if they be scruples, heeding them is dangerous; so there is danger on every side.

And though I considered not the danger, yet I would not entertain *doubts* and *scruples* with such humble obedience, as I desire to receive the motions of the blessed Spirit; nor examine these so strictly at the door, before I open, as I do those suspicious *doubts* and *scruples*.

And therefore I earnestly desire your directions, how to discover when these *motions* in my *mind* come from the *holy spirit*, and when they are *doubts* or *scruples* of mine own: and then what to do in the case of *doubts*, and what in the case of *scruples*: how to suppress or satisfy those I have, and how to prevent the like hereafter.

For, alas! Sir, much time which would be employed in performance of holy duties,

which it is fit I ſhould daily advance, as in grace and virtue) is ſpent every day in argument and diſpute with theſe *doubts* and *ſcruples*; which make me preſs for a ſudden Anſwer, whereby you may further oblige

Your Friend and Servant in
CHRIST *our Lord.*

The ANSWER.

A tender conſcience moſt ſubject to ſcruples: The difference between a ſcrupulous conſcience and a doubtful; and what to do when doubts, and what when ſcruples ariſe: Eleven directions to cure, or prevent a ſcrupulous conſcience.

SIR,

BY your laſt Letters I am comforted more and more; perceiving by them your progreſs and proficiency in holineſs and purity. I much commend that univerſal care you have of all your ways, that you ſo ſtrictly examine every one of your actions before you undertake, and call them back again to your account afterwards; and that you ſet God before you in all your ways.

WHICH care of yours would not be any whit abated, nor any while diſcontinued: you muſt ſtill *ſtrain* at *gnats*, leſt ſwallowing them make

way

way for Camels, or many of them amount to a Camel: Esteem not any thing so little as to adventure upon it, without consideration, lest that, or your inconsideration in it, prove a sin, tho' a little one.

And with this care and diligent examination, you must ever retain those humble thoughts you express of your own performances: we do not all we ought to do, nor is that we do alway done so well as we might have done it, by the grace of God that is in us: Or if we failed in neither of these, but perform'd all we ought, as well as God's grace did then enable us, yet are we *Unprofitable Servants*; and thereupon the Apostle chargeth us to *Pass all the time of our sojourning here in fear.*

This fear will advance our awe and reverence to God; it will quicken us in his service, and make us more diligent; and it will truly humble us, in and after all our performances.

And yet I must tell you, this fear is very prone to be extravagant, and to run out into vain *doubts* and *scruples*: And our task it is, to keep it and to moderate it; not to cast it off, nor yet to let it run out: If we keep this fear within its bounds and due limits, it will bring forth those effects of *reverence*, and *diligence*, and *humility*, and only these, and such like, which it naturally produceth; but if it break out beyond its bound, this spurious brood of *doubts* and scruples, which

are only accidentally incident unto it, will break in upon us.

And now concerning your *doubts* (though it be very hard to give particular satisfaction in general cases, especially in this of doubting, which commonly carries with it much unsatisfiedness,) somewhat I shall answer, and in the same method which you propound.

First, how you should know whether these motions and inclinations of your mind, to do this or that, or your doubt of this or that done, be from the holy spirit of God or not?

It will be very reasonable to grant, that some (perhaps many) of those motions, which you refer to in your letter, are from that blessed spirit; either checking you, for negligence, and remissness in his service, or stirring you up to greater care and diligence; and if they come from heaven, receive them you must with all humility, and obey them with all readiness and cheartulness.

But that you may discern whence the motions in you proceed, it will be necessary to examine them; whether they be according to the law of right reason written in our hearts, and to the Divine Law of God written in Holy Scripture, and to other Civil and Ecclesiastical Laws, to which we owe obedience: or whether they be contrary to these, or any of these: or (if neither according nor contrary to any one of those laws) *whether they* be beside them all.

If the motion within you stir you up to do what is commanded by any of these laws, or to forbear what is forbidden by any of them, this you may conclude to be a motion of the holy Spirit, and whithersoever it calls you, gird up your loins, and follow it. It is some virtue of piety, or justice, temperance, or obedience, or such like, or some higher degree of them, it calls you unto.

But if it prove against these laws, contrariant and repugnant to these, or to any of these, tho' but to the law of man, (at such a time, and in such a case, when it is binding) this is a temptation, either of the *flesh*, the *world*, or the *Devil*, and then I need not tell you, that you must trample it under your feet. These cannot be motions of the *holy Spirit*, who is the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever; changeth not his truth, nor his positive laws, no more than his essence; no they are not so much as *doubts* or *scruples*.

And then in the third place, if the motion be neither according to, nor against these laws, or any of them expresly, but beside them, of somewhat wherein these laws give no special command nor prohibition; in such motions *doubts* and *scruples* will arise: And how to distinguish which of them are *doubts*, and which *scruples*, will be very material, and not very easy: yet somewhat I shall say, because many good and tender consciences are much troubled with them, and the most tender perplexed about them most.

As there are degrees of ſtupefaction in e
conſciences, ſome dull and drowſy, others i
dead ſleep, ſeared and cauterized, (as the Apo
phraſeth it; ſo alſo there are degrees of quickr
and tenderneſs in good conſciences; ſome
more vigilant and tender than others, which
good alſo; yet with this difference, the more
pefaction and dullneſs, the worſe that conſcie
though not on the contrary, the more tender
the better.

For there is a certain limit of *tenderne*
conſcience, which if we exceed, though we ſin
in exceeding, yet we ſcarcely avoid ſin *by excee*
its limits: They who keep themſelves ſtri
within thoſe bounds are the ſafeſt; yea, and
beſt, tho' not the moſt tender conſciences:
although a conſcience cannot be too good, y
may be too tender; I mean not, that a con
ence *may* be too full of care to ſerve and pl
God, but that it may be too full of *doubts*
ſcruples in caring; and this I call *too tender*,
cauſe its tenderneſs is very prejudicial in the eff
of it.

Therefore, as you ought to bleſs God
cauſe he hath given you a *tender conſcience*, ſc
ſo you ought to crave of him, that it be a fi
and a reſolved conſcience; that it exceed no
in tenderneſs, as to abound with theſe *diſtra*
doubts and *ſcruples*: And as you muſt pray
it, ſo alſo you muſt endeavour to procure
firm and ſtable conſcience, by grounding it
a *ſure foundation*.

Now the foundation whereupon your conscience ought to build, is a persuasion that this or that you are about to do, is lawful and just; and according to the several degrees of firmness and stability of conscience, in several men; yea, in one and the same man concerning several actions.

If your persuasion be grounded upon faith in the Word of God, that you are persuaded to do this or that, because the Word of God directs you in it; this is a sure rule, and your persuasion, I suppose, most full and most firm. Or if your persuasion be grounded upon *knowledge*; that is, you are persuaded to do this, and to forbear that, because you know that the letter and meaning of the law directs you, both to this and that; this is also a sure rule, and your persuasion may be *full* and *firm*: And when you do any thing upon full persuasion, by the dictate of faith in the Word of God, or by the dictate of knowledge in the binding laws, you build on a rock, and the floods of *doubts*, and waves of *scruples* (though they beat vehemently) should not shake you. But commonly our persuasion is grounded upon opinion only; I am of opinion that this is *lawful* and *just*; that this is according to the rule which the Scripture gives; or that this is the meaning of such a law, and thereupon I am persuaded to do this. As when the Scripture directs me in general, that all be done *decently* and *in order*, my opinion tells me that this is *decent* and *orderly*; that *uncomely* and *disorderly*, and thereupon I do that and forbear this.

And seeing our persuasion in every particular action cannot be grounded upon *faith*, or *knowledge*, because the Word of God and binding laws, are too general for particular directions in every case; therefore, where they uphold not our persuasion, *opinion* must.

And, Sir, though your persuasion be sometimes grounded only upon an *opinion*, that you do according to the general directions in the *Word of God*, or in the *Law*, even then your *persuasion* may be *full*, and your *conscience firm*. Not such a Plerophory, indeed, of persuasion, as when *faith* or *knowledge* upheld it; yet such a *fullness* your *opinion* will bring, as is able to make your conscience *firm* and *stable*.

For where *they* guide us, there is such a certainty, that there is no *fear* at all of the *contrary*: what we *believe* and *know* cannot be *otherwise* than *so*: But where we have only *opinion* for our *guide*, there is alway, *Formido contrarii*, a secret *fear* that the *contrary* way may be the right and not this.

Yet such a *firmness* there is alway in this *conscience* which is guided by *opinion* only, as truly to distinguish it from a *doubtful conscience*, and to advance it above that: For a *doubtful conscience* wavers between this and that, *halts*, as the Prophet calls it, *between one and another*, gives no judgment nor decision, that this or that is to be done; if once it determines, though but upon *opinion*, this is no longer a *doubting conscience*.

Indeed, if the determination be faint and weak,

this

this will go for an inclination to this, rather than to that, it is no absolute opinion of it; and so it is not yet beyond the bounds of *doubting*: but as soon as the *opinion* is fix'd, the *determination* peremptory (as sentences and decisions of our judgment and opinion used to be) then *doubting* is shut out of doors: And as this is a *firm conscience*, so also, (if the *opinion* be not erroneous) it is a *good* and a *just conscience*.

THUS if you once settle and fix your *opinion*, doubting is gone, the *indeterminate wavering* of this cannot consist with the *determination* and *resolution* of that.

BUT then for *scruples*, they are not so easily excluded; they will creep upon us concerning those actions which are grounded upon faith and knowledge, and therefore you cannot hope that those actions, which are grounded upon opinion only, should be free from them.

FOR *scruples* are said to be, only probable arguments against our actions: now seeing whatsoever our actions are grounded upon (whether upon faith, or knowledge, or opinion) there may be arguments suggested (at least as probable) against them, *scruples* therefore may consist with the most firm conscience.

AND upon this, the difference will be plain between *doubts* and *scruples*: Doubts do suspend the judgment; no decision, on this, or that side, where *doubting* is; but *scruples* may consist *with that* judgment which opinion gives; ye

with that, which faith, or knowledge, give, as absolute, and as firm, as they are: Scruples may come in, whatsoever we do, and trouble us, and shake us, and their design is to weaken, and dishearten us too.

EXAMINE then by this, whether yours be *doubts* or *scruples*: If that sentence which your faith, or knowledge, or opinion gave, concerning this, or that, to be done, or left undone, stands still firm, as when you gave it first, unreversed, it is not a *doubt*, which ariseth in you, concerning this, or that; but a *scruple* only: a *doubt* reverses the sentence already given, and suspends from giving any other; this is only an argument, which, though it hath not reason enough to prevail with you, for reversing the sentence and judgment, which directed you, in this or that action, yet it seems to have probability enough, to trouble, and disquiet you about it.

AND when you have distinguished, whether these motions which arise in you, be *doubts*, or *scruples*, you must do accordingly.

AND it will be material for you to observe what you imply in your letter, that these motions arise in you, one while upon deliberation of what is to be done; and another while, upon re-examination of that which has been done.

If they arise, before you do this, or that, the *question then is*, within yourself, whether you *ght to do*, this, or that; or whether you are [illegible] thus, or thus: and if these mo-

tions be then so impetuous upon you, as to cause you truly to doubt, whether that you are about be lawful, or unlawful, in that case you have an express direction from the Apostle, *Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin*: that is, whatsoever we do without a full perswasion and opinion of the lawfulness of it, is sin.

When our conscience doubeth and suspendeth to judge, or determine this, or that, we must suspend from doing this or that, which it doubts of; he, who doth what he himself doth not determine to be right and fit, but wavers, and doubts, whether it be so or no, sinneth.

In which case of *doubting*, of these two, doing, or not doing, it is as likely to do what is right, as what is not, there is one way to chuse the good, and but one way to chuse the evil; and yet I say not only, he may sin by taking the left hand, but he does sin, though he lights upon the right: for though he doth that which is right, he doth it not rightly; he ventured blindfold upon it, without any guide of faith, knowledge, or opinion, doubtingly.

To prevent this certain sinning, by doing doubtingly, you must resolve yourself fully of the lawfulness of all your actions, before you undertake them, that you *condemn not yourself, in that, which you allow yourself* to do. *Be fully perswaded in your own mind*, that you may do *this, or that, lawfully*, and then do it.

But then if these motions which arise in

are found to be only *scruples*, you are fully perfuaded in your own mind, that you ought to do this, or that, and yet objections crowd into your mind to the contrary; in that case I must join with your full perswasion, and put you forward to do that which it directs to do, and that with chearfulness and speed: if you defer till these *scruples* be allayed, others may arise, and then you must stay to satisfy them also, and so it is too likely that you will wholly neglect that duty; for *scruples* will encrease and multiply so much the more, if they be heeded and cherished.

THUS, if your motions be upon deliberation what is to be done: but now if they be upon re-examination, what hath been done, and the question is, whether this or that were well done: in this case, you must recall to mind upon what grounds you did this, or that; whether faith, knowledge, or opinion directed you so to do: And of these, opinion is most likely to deceive you; yea, that only can mislead you (for that is not faith, nor knowledge neither (but an opinion only that it is faith, or knowledge) which can direct you to do any thing that is amiss.) And if it appear to you now, that the opinion which directed you then, was not true; you were fully perfuaded in your mind, but erroneously perfuaded; then your business will be, to cast off that error, to repent of it, and to repent also of that action into which your blind guide misled you: *And if the action* were of that nature, as slander

and

and injustice against our neighbour, you are bound also to repair your brother, in whatsoever he was damnified by it.

THUS you know many, who were once of that opinion (wherein some protestants, and most papists, agree) that it is lawful to propagate the true religion, by force and war, (and thereupon engaged themselves in spoiling and robbing, and slaying the dissentient Party) who being now of another opinion, that to reform religion by the sword, is an offering violence to the tender consciences of many, and a doing evil, that good may come of it, spend their time wholly in lamenting their former *error* and *sin*; and their estates in *repairing* such men, whom in that their *error*, they had spoiled and injured.

THOUGH the action was *done* upon a full persuasion of the lawfulness of it, yet that persuasion appearing now *erroneous* such repentance, and restitution, they think required of them.

AND in others, where these motions produce not a contrary opinion, yet *doubts* they may produce; and thus it may be with you; when you undertook this, or that action, you were fully persuaded in your mind of the lawfulness of it; but now *doubts* arise in you concerning it; and you cannot determine whether you did lawfully, or unlawfully in it; in this case your labour will be to resolve yourself *de novo*, to study and consult of the lawfulness of that action, as if you *were now* again to undertake it; and when your

doubt is resolved into an opinion, you need little direction in that case: If it be the same opinion again resumed, which guided you to that action, then you may bless God, and plead your innocency in that action, against all objectors, and objections: If you are convinced by reason and argument, to alter your opinion, then the former direction is to you in this case also.

And thus I meet with some in every street, who took Oaths and Covenants, upon the full persuasion of the lawfulness of them, now so much doubting whether they did well, or ill therein, that they consult their books, and their spiritual directors afresh, to be resolved concerning them: and when they alter their opinions (though their oath cannot be unsworn, nor the actions, done in pursuance of it, undone) yet I hope to see them so truly penitent, that these sins will not be laid to their charge.

And thirdly, if these motions which arise in your mind, upon re-examination of what you have done, be *scruples* only: arguments (or objections rather) suggested as probable, which do no way divert you from your opinion which guided you in this, or that action; nor yet bring you into a true *doubt*, whether your *action* were *lawful* or *not*; in this case, the more you neglect these scrupulous motions, the better and the *sooner you* will possess your soul in quietness and *peace*.

And now Sir, that you may be the better able

to

to eject those *scurples* you have already, and to prevent others also hereafter, you shall do well; first, truly to inform yourself of the cause, or original, whence they proceed.

In some they proceed from the temper of the body: a melancholick constitution, which is most subject to fears and sadness, if it hath a tender conscience therewith, is commonly full of these scruples also: In others they proceed from a sceptical wit, which is alway enquiring, seldom satisfied; if that temper and this wit meet together with a tender conscience, *scruples* will abound: In others they may be from the Devil; he (by indisposing our bodies, or raising fancies, or otherwise more immediatly by himself, without any advantage taken from us) casts these *scruples* into our minds.

And from what causes soever these *scruples* proceed, they commonly come like Angels of *light*, with goodly shews, and holy language, moving to more exact *obedience* (as is pretended) and to more *universal*, and more punctual *performances*. And this they usually urge so *eagerly*, that it is hard to distinguish them from those motions of the *holy* spirit, which I spake of even now: your examination of them therefore must be with some *diligence*: and if after that, you find those *motions* and *fervors* in your mind, not to be from the *holy* spirit, but *scruples* proceeding from one of these fountains, or from s-
like:

THEN *ſecondly*, you may conſider the many inconveniencies which *they may* bring upon *you*; how they weaken your mind, make it unſtable as *water*; how *they* diſturb you in *many* performances, divert *you* from ſome; how inconſiſtent *they* are with that *ſerenity* of conſcience, and chearfulneſs of mind, which otherwiſe *you* might *enjoy*; how they darken your underſtanding, and make *your* will and affections alſo dull and heavy in *holy duties*, and your whole life uncomfortable; how they lead into *error* and *ſuperſtition* oft-times, and may at length bring you into *fear* and *perplexity*; yea (if the Devil can have his will) even into deſperation itſelf: when you reckon up theſe, and what other inconveniencies *you* find, or can fear from theſe *ſcruples*, *you* will not *delay* to obſerve what *you* think fitteſt for *your* cure, or eaſe.

THEREFORE, *thirdly*, ſome directions I ſhall name: and I muſt begin with the chief; humble and fervent prayer to God, from whom *alone you* can receive *comfort* and *quiet*: then ghoſtly advice and direction from from friends, *praying* God to direct *your* director, and reſolving (if poſſible) to reſt ſatisfied in what he directs. *Thirdly*, divert, I pray, *yourſelf* from theſe *ſcruples* (as much as *you* can) caſt off the thoughts of them, *foment* them not by heeding them, nor by converſing frequently, with *ſcrupulous perſons*; yea, *drive them* away by croſs *ſcruples*, that is, propounding *your* more probable arguments against *your* leſs probable.

OR a fourth way may be, by adhering to those opinions, which are most probable, most favourable, and most common, and by ordering our practices after them; rigid, and singular opinions open a wide door for *scruples* to enter in.

A FIFTH: Consider, I pray, in all your perplexities, the *wonderful moderation of Christ's commands*; that he hath taken away the rigor of the *law*, and requires no more of us, than he *enables* us to *perform*: He expects not from us, the performance of all things, in that manner as they may be done by our utmost possible diligence and care, but accepts them at his throne of grace, if they be performed by our *utmost moral diligence* and *care*: according to the ordinary course of human diligence in other matters: therefore we ought not to be *disquieted*, that we do not our utmost *possible diligence*, to observe his commands, for by such *scruples* we shall be slacked and hindered in doing *our utmost moral diligence.*

A SIXTH: To trust in *God's mercies through Christ*, that he will give grace to enable us to what he requires, and pardon what is amiss; *He knows whereof we are made*, how frail and weak we are, and will have *compassion* of our infirmities.

SEVENTHLY: to be truly sensible *of our own natural corruption*, that of ourselves we are not able *to think a good thought*, it must be the *grace of God* which enables us; and by that grace we are *not enabled* (in this our frail condition) to

that exact *performance* which the *rigor of the law* requires; only to that sincere and upright *obedience*, which God, through Christ, will be pleased to accept. And though I hope no scruples arise in you, presuming of your natural strength, yet some may arise *not* weighing the *imperfection of our mortal condition*, even in *our regenerate* state: And if so, it will be a *good* means towards the cure: that you learn to discern between *your personal* weaknesses, and *those of our mortal condition*, (which are common to all while they are in the flesh) and charge yourself as culpable and sinful, *only in those particular defects*, not in these *general* ones: It is an unhappiness, *(not to be thought on without grief of heart)* that we cannot now live, as in Paradise, exactly performing the *will of God* always, in all things, with all our faculties; but I hope, if it be lamented, it will *not amount to a sin*, at Christ's *throne of grace*.

An Eighth: rightly to understand that general rule of the Casuists, *In dubiis tutior pars eligenda*, In doubtful matters to chuse the safest side; first, it must be in *doubtful* matters, where there is *truly a doubt*, not in *scrupulous* matters: Secondly, we are *not alway bound* to chuse the safest, *provided* that what we chuse is safe: which is the safest will be hard to resolve in some cases, and if you stay for that *resolution*, scruples will *flow* in. You *do not* sin, if *you* chuse that which *is safe*; and that is safe, which (as I said before) *is grounded* upon *faith*, *knowledge*, or opinion, *so you be not* deceived in them.

A

A NINTH may be, by qualifying that ſtrict *opinion*, that we are *alway bound to do* that which is beſt: it is moſt true, we are to aim at the faireſt and beſt, and to preſs *towards* it; but if then we miſs it, and *come ſhort of it*, we ſin not; if that which *you do be good*, though it might have been better, lament the *imperfection you ſhould*, and yet praiſe *God for the goodneſs of it*.

A TENTH may be, by conſidering, that affirmative precepts lay *not ſo* ſtrict an *obligation upon* us, as negative precepts do: theſe *obligant ad ſemper*, (as Caſuiſts ſpeak) they not: for negative precepts are not *broken*, but by committing ſome *act*; affirmative by *omitting only*; and our *obligation* is not ſo ſtrict againſt *omitting*, as it is againſt *committing*. A caſe may happen wherein it may be lawful to *omit* the affirmative (as keeping the *holy* Feſtivals and Faſts of the Church, *for God will have mercy and not ſacrifice*) though no caſe can *poſſibly* happen, wherein I may *lawfully commit* that which is againſt the negative; I cannot be excuſed if I take God's name in vain, by Oaths and Covenants, though merciſulneſs towards myſelf, wife, and children, (in ſaving my eſtate thereby) plead for me: and *ſo for other* negative precepts: therefore if the checks *you* hear within *yourſelf* be concerning affirmatives, they *may* be the *more* ſuſpected for ſcruples, and *ſooner* anſwered, than if they be concerning negatives.

LASTLY, ſeeing theſe ſcruples come to you,

ſuch *good words*, and ſuch *holy* pretences, the beſt way *to* defeat them of their *miſchievous purpoſes* is, *to take them at thoſe their good words, and go no further with them*; Let thoſe *words of theirs*, ſtir you up to a *more* univerſal and a *more* exact care in the ſervice *of God*; thus you may make even theſe deceitful *Gibeonites* ſerviceable to the uſe *of God's Tabernacle.*

THUS, becauſe the danger from theſe *ſcruples* may be great, *therefore* the *directions* to ſuppreſs and prevent, *or to* defeat them are many; and yet *more you* may ſuggeſt to *yourſelf*, *or* read in *books of devotion*, and *Caſuiſts*: By ſome of theſe, or ſuch like, *you may*, I doubt not, obtain eaſe *from your* perplexities; and peace and comfort in *your holy* and juſt performances. And (as in the diſeaſes *of your body*, ſo in this *of your ſoul)* the *ſooner you go about* the cure, the better; it is eaſieſt at firſt; the more theſe ſcruples gain upon you, the more unſatisfiable they are, and there will be the greater difficulty to caſt them out.

AND here I muſt add a caution or two, Firſt, that you take very great heed, that you eject not the motions of the bleſſed Spirit, as if they were ſcruples; that *you* learn to diſtinguiſh between Thoſe and Theſe: and *whenſoever thoſe knock* at the *door of your heart*, open to them; whenſoever they call or whiſper to you, ſay, *Speak Lord, for thy ſervant heareth.*

SECONDLY, that *you* beware of the common *error of the world*, which is, to account all ſtrict rul

rules of Juſtice or Temperance, Obedience to Parents; yea, and the punctual, preciſe ſervice of God, (though they be moſt abſolutely neceſſary) *ſcruples* and *niceties*; and deride the practiſers of ſuch rules as *ſcrupulous perſons.*

And now at the laſt in the cloſe of your Letter, you ſeem to grudge all time, which is not ſpent by you in holy duties and prayer, and you think fit to advance in them, as in other graces and virtues: Love, I ſee, is liberal, and where you love much, you will ſtill be giving more.

And the more you increaſe in love, the leſs will that ſeem to be which you beſtow; that which is much now, will ſeem leſs hereafter: And if you think fit your holy duties of prayer and meditation ſhould advance ſtill, in proportion to your love: Remember withal that of *Jacob*, the mighty man of prayer, to drive no faſter than the children and cattle (your weak body, *Jumentum animæ*, as the Fathers call it) are able to endure.

Now my Prayer ſhall be, That all theſe ſhakings by *doubts* and *ſcruples* may tend to root you more deep, and more firm in the love of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, to whoſe grace and mercy I commend you, and reſt

Your Servant in Christ Jesus.

F I N I S.